NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

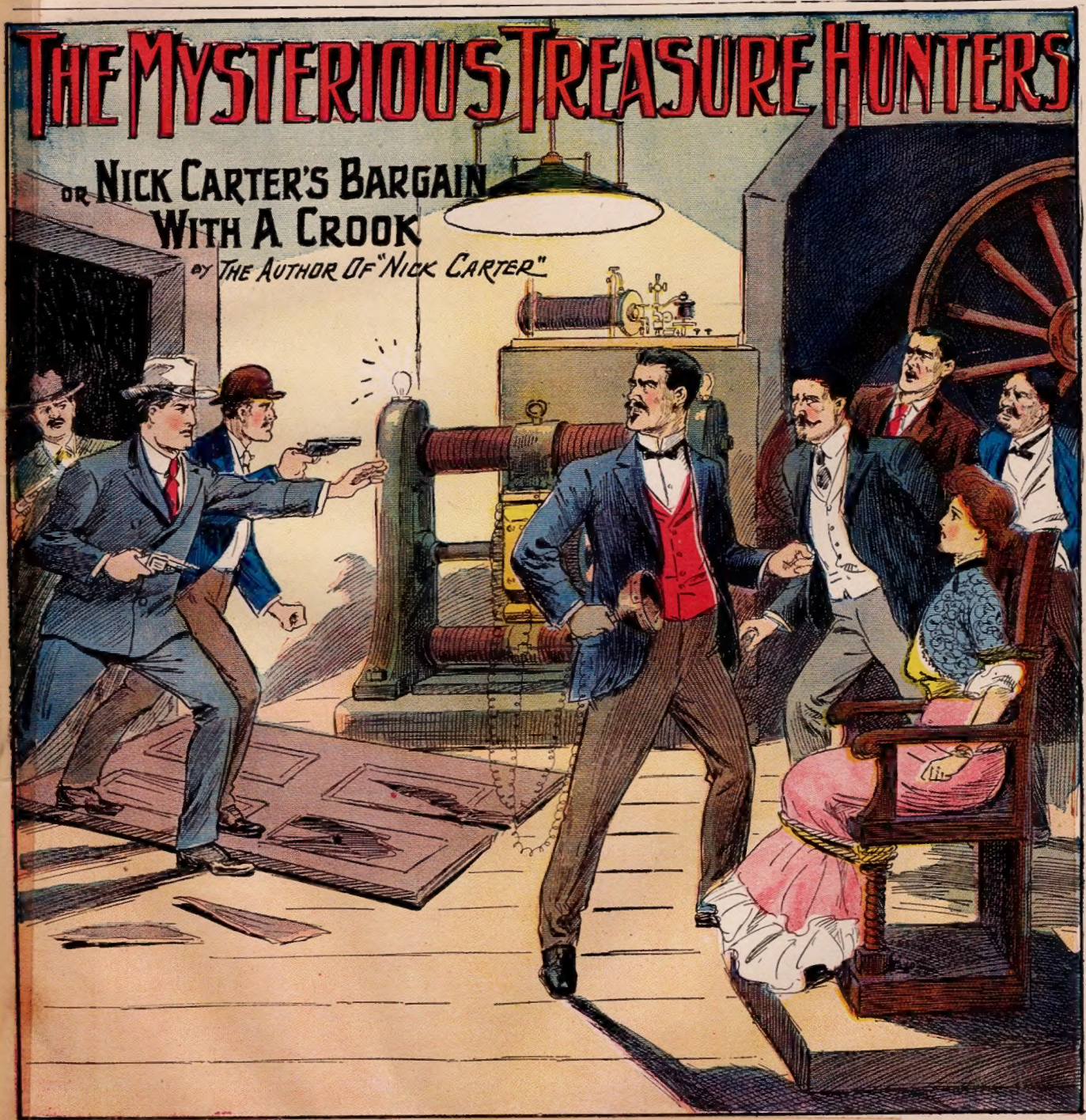
Issued Weekly. By subscription $2.50 per year. Entered as Second-class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office, by STREET & SMITH, 79-89 Seventh Ave., N. Y.

No. 494 NEW YORK, JUNE 16, 1906. Price, Five Cents

# THE MYSTERIOUS TREASURE HUNTERS

## OR NICK CARTER'S BARGAIN WITH A CROOK

BY THE AUTHOR OF "NICK CARTER"



The man with the electrode started back with a cry, and the others bounded to their feet in terror as Nick Carter and his men dashed upon them.

NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

*Issued Weekly. By subscription $2.50 per year. Entered as Second-class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office, by* STREET & SMITH, *79-89 Seventh Avenue, N. Y. Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1906, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C.*

No. 494. NEW YORK, June 16, 1906. Price Five Cents.

# The Mysterious Treasure Hunters;

## OR,

# NICK CARTER'S BARGAIN WITH A CROOK.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE ATTACK ON THE TREASURE VAULTS.

Nick Carter guided his automobile between the gate-posts which formed the entrance to the grounds of the Lee Mansion on Washington Heights, and the great Peerless glided gracefully and noiselessly along the winding roadway until it came to a stop under the *porte cochere*, where the young chatelaine of the vast estate with its unnumbered millions was awaiting him.

As he sprang to the ground and relinquished the care of the car to a machinist, who was there to receive it and take charge of it, Miriam Lee stepped forward with extended hand and with a bright smile on her charming face.

"Really, Mr. Carter, you look lonely in that big car without a companion," she said, as he grasped her hand.

"I suppose so," replied Nick, laughing, "but you know your message asked me particularly to come alone, and 'to hear you is to obey,' you know."

"Oh, is it? In that case I may regard the favor I am to ask of you as already done."

"You may, most certainly, just so far as we are permitted to anticipate the future."

She led the way inside the mansion where the butler, Harrison, received the detective's coat, and hat, and gauntlets, and then continued on to the library where she paused irresolutely.

"Shall we stop here?" she asked, "or shall we go into the office?"

"The office by all means," replied Nick. "I feel infinitely more at home there."

And so they passed on through the library, traversed a short entry between that room and the south wing of the mansion, and finally passed through a doorway where a huge steel door, provided with all the safety appliances known to modern skill for protection, and half concealed by curtains, was open to receive them.

The "office," so called for the reason that Burleigh Lee, Miriam's father, had used it as his counting-room at

home during his life, was really a remarkable place, since this wing in which it was located was built entirely of harveyized steel, reenforced by granite and cement, and because this steel box—it could be called nothing else—really extended two stories underground—that is directly beneath the office.

These were the strong boxes where Burleigh Lee had kept his millions which now belonged to his daughter, and in all the length of Manhattan Island there were no safe deposit vaults half so strong or so thoroughly made as these.

Nobody knew just how many millions Miriam Lee could command in ready cash, but that she counted them by tens and not by units, nobody doubted, for she had been the sole legatee of the vast fortune accumulated by her father, that eccentric capitalist, who, during his life, had swayed the destinies of empires, and who had been known to be the only man who was really feared by the Standard Oil.

And this estate, this mansion with the extensive ground surrounding it, had been his home.

Situated as it was almost at the extremity of Manhattan Island, somewhat above what is now generally known as Washington Heights, it was at the time of its creation, out in the country above New York, but time had wrought changes, and now the city had almost encroached upon it.

But the ten or more acres of ground which formed the dooryard, and the high, spear-topped wall which surrounded it were still intact, and Miriam Lee lived there, a queen in her own domain.

"Now, tell me at once what has happened," demanded the detective, as soon as they were seated before the fire that burned brightly in the grate. "Your note rather startled me."

"I am sorry for that. Nothing has really happened you know."

"Then why——"

"It is that I fear that something is about to happen."

"You are not given to indulging in idle fears, Miriam," said the detective, "and I know you sufficiently well to feel assured that you would not have sent me that summons to come here unless you had a good reason for it."

"That is quite true, Mr. Carter; all the same I hesitate to tell you, now that you are here, for I am very much afraid you will laugh at me."

"I have never had occasion to do so yet," said the detective quietly. "What is it that you fear?"

"You remember what is deposited in the vaults beneath this room, as well as I," she said, instead of replying to his question.

"Yes; something like a hundred million dollars, more or less."

"More, I should say," she smiled back at him. "Very well; this is what I fear: I am convinced in my own mind, possibly without any very good reason for it, that there is an effort being made from the outside to enter those vaults."

The detective shrugged his shoulders and laughed.

"I think we argued out all the possibilities of such a thing once before, Miss Lee," he said, "and I also think that we agreed that such a thing was quite impossible. We did find the secret entrance to the third vault, now closed, which your father had abandoned and about which he neglected to inform you before his death; but that is now stopped up with cement. I do not believe that an entrance to the vaults could be obtained from the outside, now."*

"I said that you would laugh at me," she murmured.

"I am not laughing at you," he replied.

"It is the same thing."

"No, it is not; and remember, you have not yet told me the reason for your statement."

Again she seemed to hesitate, and then she said, very quietly:

"In order that I may not appear illogical, and in order that neither of us may neglect a single particular connected with this matter, let us go over the ground of the other affair for a moment."

"Very well."

"When I sent for you that other time to assist in explaining a mystery which seemed to me to be inexplicable, and when, in theorizing about it, you suggested that the only explanation of the affair of my missing millions was a secret entrance to the vaults which my father had neglected to inform me about, I scoffed at the idea, and said that such a thing was impossible; that I knew my father so well that I was positive he would not have died and left me in ignorance of such an important matter—did I not?"

"Yes."

"And yet we found that secret entrance which you said must be there."

"Yes."

"And together, from the list of workmen employed by my father when he built this place, we succeeded in selecting the name of the very man who was responsible for the theft of the five millions that had been stolen."

"Yes."

"Jean Gevrais."

"Yes. But why——"

"Please wait."

"Well?"

"And we found, did we not, that there had been three others of the old-time workmen who were concerned with Gevrais in that affair which they had taken fifteen or more years to accomplish?"

*Read No. 493 of the NICK CARTER WEEKLY, "A Dead Guardian of Millions."

"Yes."

"At least, that was what Gevrais told us."

"It was."

"And of those four, three are now dead, and Gevrais himself is in prison awaiting trial for murder."

"Surely."

"So, if Gevrais told us the truth—that is to say, if there were really only four men in all concerned in that robbery, we are now in a position to account for all four of them, and I should, therefore, have nothing more to fear. That is the condition of the case at the present moment, is it not?"

"It certainly is."

"Mr. Carter, I believe that Jean Gevrais lied to us."

"That is not at all unlikely," said Nick. "I am quite sure that lies would come more naturally to his lips than truths; but tell me, what has all that to do with your present fears, Miss Lee?"

"You will remember yourself," she persisted, "that when we were theorizing about the theft of the five millions, it was your opinion that there might be as many as ten, or possibly more than that number of the old workmen engaged in the plot. Don't you remember that you made that statement?"

"I do."

"Very well, it is my present belief that you were correct in that idea, and that there were at least several more than the four we can account for."

"What of it, Miss Lee?"

"Oh, I know that I am beating about the bush somewhat in making the disclosure of my own fears to you, but I wish to justify myself in your eyes before I tell you exactly what it is that I fear."

"Very well; go ahead in your own way."

"I thought the whole matter over calmly and dispassionately before I sent for you, and I have come to the conclusion that there was a regularly organized gang of conspirators in that other affair, and that in capturing Gevrais and accounting, as we supposed, for the others who were concerned with him, we really only lopped off one of the branches of it."

"That, also, is quite possible."

"I believe that many—if not all who are left alive—of the old workmen who worked on this wing of the mansion for my father before I was born, are organized in a general conspiracy, or campaign, for the purpose of robbing me of the money that is now in the vaults beneath this room."

"Let us grant that all you say is true; again I say, what of it? How are they going to obtain an entrance to them? Let me tell you, Miss Lee, that if a war-ship were out there in the river a mile or two away, and if it were to batter this wing of the house with six-inch shells all day long, I doubt even then if it would be demolished."

"Science, and acids, and electricity, Mr. Carter, might accomplish what several tons of six-inch shells could not."

"Well?"

"The point is this: If such a conspiracy does exist—if those men *are* here in this neighborhood in force, determined to accomplish the purpose I have named, it goes without saying that they have some well-defined plan of operation, does it not?"

"Most assuredly. The point that I am contending is that such a plan of operation, no matter what it might be, would fail."

"And yet I fear—I greatly fear that it will succeed, unless we take immediate measures to meet them halfway."

"But you must have some well-defined reason, some certain reason for harboring these new fears, Miss Lee."

"I have. I believe that even now those men have tunneled beneath the ground to the walls of this wing of the house. I believe that even now they are slowly but surely boring through that supposedly impassable barrier. I am convinced that we have no time to lose."

## CHAPTER II.

### A COMPANY OF CONSPIRATORS.

Nick Carter and Miriam Lee had become very good friends, indeed, during that other experience of theirs to which she had just referred; she had always made him feel thoroughly at home in her presence and in her house, and so now, before he replied to her last remark, he settled somewhat lower in his chair, drew a cigar from his pocket, and with an inquiring glance toward her to which she replied with a bright nod, he applied a match to it and exhaled several breaths of smoke before he replied. Then he said:

"All this would seem to indicate that you have actually discovered something which provides you with a foundation for your theories."

"It does."

"What is it?"

"I have heard mysterious sounds which I have been unable to locate. I——"

"Where? Where were you when you have heard these sounds?"

"In the vaults under this room."

"In which of them?"

"In the lower one, of course; but also—faintly—in the upper one, too."

"What are the sounds like? What do they suggest?"

"I don't know. My ears are not sufficiently trained to answer that question. But the sounds are not all."

"No? What more?"

"In trying to locate those indefinite sounds, or noises,

I placed one ear against the wall last evening, and—I received a distinct shock of electricity."

"Eh? What's that?"

"That is why I made the remark a few moments ago that electricity and other things might accomplish what six-inch shells could not do."

"A shock of electricity from the steel walls of this building?" mused Nick; and then he smiled.

"It was very slight, of course," she admitted, "but it was, nevertheless, a shock of electricity."

"We will have to have the wiring of this room examined," he said.

"I have already done that," she quietly replied. "I sent at once for the electrician and directed him to examine, thoroughly, every wire and every inch of insulation. The wiring is perfect. The shock did not come from defective wiring."

"Humph!" said Nick.

"But even that is not all," she continued.

"What! Is there still another reason for your suspicions?"

"A decided one."

"What is it?"

"After experiencing the shock and starting back from the wall, as it was quite natural that I should do, I approached it again and placed my hand against it. Mr. Carter, the wall was decidedly warm—*warm.*"

"I understand."

"I was surprised. I will confess that for a moment I was frightened."

"Well?"

"But that did not last long. I very quickly recovered myself, and then I went carefully all around that chamber, feeling of the walls here and there, and several times placing my ear against it again, notwithstanding my fear of another, and possibly a more severe, shock."

"And you found—what?"

"I found that in several places the wall was distinctly warm. In some places the heat was more noticeable than in others—and twice again I received slight shocks such as I have already described."

"This was last evening, you say?"

"Yes."

"About what time?"

"A little past ten."

"Isn't it rather an unusual thing for you to visit the treasure-vaults in the evening?"

"Decidedly so; but last night I went down there purposely to watch and wait."

"Oh! So you have had these suspicions for some time, eh?"

"For a month. Ever since that other affair, in fact."

"What was it that first gave you the idea?"

"Conjecture."

"Eh?"

"The mere putting of two and two together."

"You will have to be more explicit. That is one of my own favorite expressions, but I do not exactly see the application here."

"The application is this: I have thought ever since the capture of Jean Gevrais, that he deceived us about the number of his confederates. I have never for a moment believed that those four men were all who were concerned in the robberies here; and, believing as I did, I have also thought that if there *were* others, they would not be a very long time in making some concerted effort against these vaults."

"And so you have been watching?"

"Yes. I have been watching all the time. I have gone into the vaults in the daytime and in the evening—*and I have heard noises frequently, although it was not till last night that I had the other experiences.*"

"And when have you heard the noises mostly? During the day, or——"

"I have never heard anything at all during the day; always in the night."

"Let me see," said Nick. "There are twenty-four inches of harveyized steel and twenty-four more inches of granite and cement for them to pierce before they can hope to gain an entrance to any part of this wing of the building, lower than the surface of the ground. Am I correct?"

"Perfectly."

"Do you suppose that any sane burglar would undertake such a task, Miss Lee?"

"No; I do not."

"Well, then?"

"I do not for a moment suppose these men to be burglars."

She stopped short, looked narrowly at the detective, and then laughed in a low, pleased tone.

"I understand you now," she said. "I thought you did not believe all that I was saying. I thought that you supposed me to be needlessly alarmed, but now I see that you have known all along that this thing is serious and that you have merely been pretending that you do not believe it possible for anybody to pierce these walls; and you have been doing that merely to draw me out."

Nick flicked the ashes from his cigar into the fire, and replied:

"You are partly right and partly wrong. However, I do wish to draw you out, for I know you have not thought idly on this subject. Please, therefore, complete what you were about to say. You do not for a moment suppose these men to be burglars; who, then, do you suppose they are?"

"Engineers."

"Eh? Mir—Miss Lee, I confess that you rather startle me."

"I like the sound of Miriam best whenever you care

to make use of it," she said smilingly. "You have already called me that once to-day, without knowing it, so it seems to come rather natural."

"Why engineers?" he asked her.

"Your first question on this point is a reply to that one; because I do not suppose that any sane burglar would undertake such a task. It would be no joke to pierce two feet of steel and two feet of granite without attracting the attention of the occupants of a residence where such a thing was done. It would require the work of skilled engineers; don't you think so?"

"I certainly do think so."

"And we must not forget that every man who was employed on this building by my father was a master of his craft. They were all intelligent men."

"There is another thing, too, Miss Lee."

"Yes?"

"Many of them were young men at the time. Twenty-five years and more have passed since they were employed here. They have had all these years in which to think out their plans and perfect them. Really I begin to think that you are both right and wrong in your estimation of Gevrais and the others."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that I still think that Gevrais worked independently—that is with his three assistants, and that this present attack upon the vaults is a thing apart from that one."

"Why?"

"Gevrais had a specific object, which was to find the men who could assist him in unveiling the mysteries of the secret entrance. He wanted the help of no others, and whenever he came in contact with any of the other workmen—I mean those who were not directly connected with the manufacture of the mechanism of that third vault—he dismissed them."

"I understand."

"I mean that out of all the workmen who replied to his advertisements, he selected only those who could be of use to him in finding that secret entrance."

"Yes."

"But in dismissing the others, he also had succeeded in putting a bee in their bonnets, so to speak. I think that this conspiracy, as you call it, is entirely independent of Gevrais' effort, but that it, of course, has the same object in view."

"And that it is composed of ex-employees on this building."

"Yes."

Miriam was silent a moment, and then she said:

"Then we are to suppose this:

"During the quarter of a century that has elapsed since my father built these steel safe deposit vaults, the workmen whom he employed and whom he brought from different parts of the world for the purpose, have found time to get together. Doubtless, some of them have succeeded very well in life; probably some of them are wealthy.

"They have studied and followed the career of the man who employed them. They are aware that when my father died he was worth unnumbered millions. They are certain that those millions, or many of them, are stored in the vaults which they helped to create——"

"Go on, please."

"Mr. Carter, I haven't a bit of doubt in my own mind that they have organized a regular company for the 'recovery' of this treasure, so to speak; just as many an expedition has been organized in the same manner to search for pirate hoards."

"You don't really suppose that they would have the cheek to incorporate such a company, do you?" asked the detective, with a twinkle in his eyes.

"Now you are laughing at me."

"You would rather be laughed at than reproved, wouldn't you?"

"Assuredly. But tell me, Mr. Carter——"

"Yes."

"Now that we are agreed that something is being done to pierce these walls; now that we are agreed that an attack is being made upon my treasure-house, what are *we* to do?"

"Meet the enemy, and conquer him."

"That is all very well; but how are we to meet the enemy?"

"Why, I have always believed in meeting the enemy on his own ground when that is possible. If they are really engaged in tunneling into this house, there must be a means of discovering where they are at work and how they are doing their work. That seems to be a general outline of the campaign, doesn't it?"

"Yes. And will you take charge of it?"

"*Will I take charge of it!* I most certainly will."

"Then my worries are at an end," sighed Miriam.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE MEN BEYOND THE WALL.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon when the detective arrived at the Lee mansion.

Miriam had sent a letter to him by messenger, asking that he would call there that afternoon if he could make it convenient, and that he come alone.

She wished to have this quiet talk with him.

Well satisfied in her own mind that her suspicions were founded on good grounds, she yet feared that he would not entertain them, and she had been very reluctant to introduce the subject at all.

It does seem incredible that any one would undertake to pierce such barriers as the walls of those treasure-vaults presented.

Suppose, reader, that you should have made a box of hardened steel, twenty-four inches in thickness, and of the outside dimensions of that office wing of the house, and that then you should sink it two stories deep into the earth; that would be exactly what these vaults were.

Suppose then, that in addition to this, you should surround the whole with an additional two feet of granite and cement; you would then have a fair representation of the building in its completeness, outside.

The old capitalist, Burleigh Lee, had often told his daughter that that wing alone cost him more than a million before he had done a thing to the interior—and there is no doubt that he spent another million on that, with its secret doors and wonderful mechanical appliances.

And remember that workmen had been brought from every part of the world to add to its perfections; that they had been brought there secretly; that during the time of their employment they had never been permitted to converse with one another; that they were each brought from the steamship to the house, and were returned to their homes in the same manner after their work was done.

It was a wonderful bit of architecture, that wing!

And all his life, Burleigh had gone on amassing millions and millions until he was regarded—with one possible exception—as the richest man in the world, and until even that one exception feared him.

But he was an old man, and he died; and dying, he left all that vast estate, and all those unnumbered millions to his daughter, the only relative he had in the world, he used to say.

And then there was that strange habit of his, of keeping so much of his fortune in cash, ever ready at hand for instant use in any deal he cared to make.

He had taught his daughter the science of finance from her birth, believing that after his death, she would continue the battles he had fought all his life; but such a career was not to her tastes, and little by little she converted her holdings into cash and bonds, and deposited them in the vaults under that office, where they were safer by far than they could have been in any bank.

It was decided that Nick Carter should remain to dinner, and that later in the evening, he would descend with Miriam into the vaults to ascertain if it were possible for him to hear the noises, and feel the heat, and the electric shocks that she had described.

"I am very much impressed by one word that you used in our conversation in the office," the detective said to her, as they were leaving the table. "It seems to me to be the key to the whole affair, and I really do not believe I should have thought of it; at least, not at once."

"What word do you mean?" she asked.

"'Engineers.'"

"Oh, yes. Well, you see I have spent a good many hours thinking the matter over, and I arrived at my conclusion very simply."

"How was that?"

"I asked myself this question: Suppose there was situated somewhere in the world a great treasure-chamber which any one might attack and win, if admittance could be had? Suppose that the great treasure-chamber in question were erected on exactly the same plans as this one? Now what methods would you employ in attacking it? Those are the questions I asked myself."

"Yes."

"The reply was: I would employ engineers—skilled engineers. I would search the world over until I found the right man. And then, Mr. Carter, there arose another question."

"And that was——"

"Suppose the work had to be done secretly? Suppose tunneling was necessary? Suppose there were hostile influences near at hand? What would you do?"

"And what was the answer to that?"

"The reply to that was that I should first store my mind with infinite patience, and that then I would begin operations so far away from the real goal of my labors that no person on earth, however hostile, could suspect my real object."

"Bravo!"

"You agree with me?"

"Perfectly."

"I think if I were in charge of that company of conspirators, which I am certain has been organized for an attack on this house, I would direct first that another house—and a quite pretentious one at that—should be found where a base of operations could be made. Then, from the cellar——"

The detective held up one hand, and she paused.

"That wouldn't do at all," he said.

"Why not?"

"For the reason that it could not be done. You would not be able to work there three days without being discovered."

"You think not?"

"Certainly not."

"What then?"

"Why not build the house?"

"I don't understand. Oh! yes I do! That would give you the right to make all the excavations you pleased, and the dirt and rock taken from your tunnel would not materially increase the output."

"Precisely. But more than that, nobody would ask questions."

"I see. Then we must look for new buildings going up in the neighborhood."

Nick smiled at her enthusiasm.

"Hardly that," he said. "I think it would save time and trouble to look for the engineers."

"But where would you look for them?"

"Who knows? We might find them in an office building down-town, with a sign on the door which would read something like this: 'The French-American Lee-Homestead Treasure and Excavation Company, limited.' Eh?"

"I wish you wouldn't laugh at me."

"I am not laughing at you. I think you are a wonder."

"But how are we to catch those men?"

"Just at the present moment I don't know—unless we burrow in the ground and meet them half-way; eh?"

"That might not be at all a bad idea," she replied thoughtfully. "My father used to own a number of mines among his various properties. I have often heard him talk about them."

"Yes?"

"There were shafts, and drifts, and cross-tunneling, I remember. Now, what is cross-tunneling? Couldn't we do that?"

The detective threw back his head and laughed heartily.

"I think we might," he said. "It would be something in the nature of what a pugilist would call cross-countering, wouldn't it? We might give them the double-cross, eh?"

"I don't care if you do laugh at me. I am very much in earnest, for I know that those men are there at work, and we have got to find them and stop them."

"And we will do so, too," replied the detective seriously.

At half-past nine o'clock they closed the steel doors, which connected the office with the entry which leads to the library, and then having drawn the steel blinds over the windows, Miriam Lee opened the secret door which led into the vault that was directly beneath the room.

From this vault they descended to the lower one, carrying the portable electric lamps of five lights each with them, and trailing out the insulated wire behind them as they descended.

"Now," said the detective, "show me at what part of the wall you heard the noises."

"Oh, I heard the noises everywhere down here. I told you that it was impossible to locate them."

"Then show me where it was that you received the shock."

"There, and there, and there," she replied, pointing toward three different parts of the chamber.

"Where did you first notice it?"

"There, near the table against the wall."

"And the heat; where did you discover that?"

"At the same point."

Nicola Tesla is the inventor of a small instrument which he calls an audiscope. He once made the statement through the press that with it he could hear what was happening on the planet Mars—but he never proved the statement satisfactorily.

All the same Nick Carter had often had occasion to make use of the audiscope, and he had discovered that it was exceedingly efficacious in just such cases as this one. He made use of it at the time of the capture of Jean Gevrais, and now he brought it into play again.

It is a small instrument, not more than eight inches in length, with a bulb in the middle, an ear-piece at one end and a suction-valve at the other end.

This suction-valve is placed against a wall, for example, and then by placing the ear-piece in position, the faintest of sounds which happen to proceed from beyond that wall may be plainly heard.

Don't misunderstand this statement.

Words cannot be understood, but voices can be heard. The sound of hammering would come distinctly to the ear, and any unusual noise might almost be identified, if not quite.

The detective crossed the room to that section of the wall indicated by Miriam and placed the audiscope tightly against it. Then he applied his ear to the opposite end.

Miriam watched him narrowly, and with intense interest.

She saw a look of amazement come over his face, and then he abruptly withdrew the instrument from the wall and moved it several feet to the right.

Again he listened, and again he seemed to be deeply interested; and then again he moved to another part of the wall.

How she longed to speak to him; to ask him what he heard; to ask him, in fact, to let her listen for a moment; but she was wise enough not to interrupt him.

And the detective, in the interest of his occupation, forgot her presence even.

He moved quickly and rapidly from place to place around the chamber, stopping here a considerable time, there not at all, passing on to another spot where he appeared to listen with renewed interest, and all the while demonstrating by his manner that he had certainly made a discovery.

And then at last he withdrew the instrument altogether and stepped back to the table in the center of the room.

"You were right, Miriam," he said. "There is work going on somewhere there in the earth."

"Can you locate it?"

"Not exactly. Not yet. But I will after a little."

"I was right, was I not?"

"Yes, you were, indeed, right. There is a concerted effort being made to break into these vaults. That much we certainly know," he replied.

## CHAPTER IV.

### A BLOW THROUGH STEEL WALLS

Miriam Lee remained standing at one side of the table staring at her companion, Nick Carter, who had just told her that there was no doubt that her conjectures had been correct, and that there *were* men burrowing through the earth toward her treasure-vaults.

For some reason she suddenly felt helpless.

The immensity of the thing had not impressed her before, as it did at that moment.

Truth to tell she had somehow regarded the thing as a sort of homely joke until now; but now that it was brought undeniably home to her that it was true—absolutely true, the grim seriousness of it all came over her like a wave, and she realized her own impotence to deal with the situation.

"What is to be done? What shall I do?" she asked, almost breathlessly.

"I am very much inclined to adopt your suggestion of cross-tunneling," he replied, with a smile.

"I am in earnest," she exclaimed, stamping her foot.

"So am I. I never was more serious in my life. The only trouble is that I cannot locate the noises I hear."

"What! Not with that instrument of yours?"

"No; it is impossible."

"And yet I saw you dash from place to place around the room."

"That is true; but the moment I found one place that seemed better than another, it immediately became not so good. I get the noises all right, but their location is absolutely impossible to determine."

"That brings me back again to the original question; what is to be done?"

"And I cannot answer it—not yet."

"When?"

"I don't know, Miriam."

"It is certain that there are men digging in the earth, near here, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"How near to us are they?"

"I cannot determine that, either."

"Can't you even approximate it?"

"Not even that. They may be fifty feet away, or a hundred. It is impossible to say."

"But that tells me that you do not think they are nearer than fifty feet."

"No; I don't think they are nearer than that. I don't think they are as near as that."

"Then how does it happen that I felt electric shocks and heat?"

"I cannot answer that——"

"*Hark!*" exclaimed Miriam; but Nick was already listening, for at that moment there had come a distinct tapping against the sides of the edifice, but from a direction directly opposite any point at which Nick had listened with his audiscope.

Instantly he seized upon it again and darted across the room to the point from which the sounds proceeded; and it is worthy of note that the tapping continued without cessation, as rhythmical as the dropping of water from the end of an icicle.

It was a very faint tapping; not louder than one might make with the thumb-nail against a window-pane—but it was, nevertheless, a distinct tapping.

And—save that it was somewhat more distinct—Nick heard nothing more than that with the aid of his audiscope.

He was standing with one hand resting against the steel wall while with the other hand he held the instrument against his ear, and of a sudden he sprang backward with a slight exclamation.

Then he turned to Miriam, and smiled.

"I got it that time," he said.

"What? The shock?"

"Yes."

"Was it severe?"

"Not at all; but as you said when you described it, it was a shock none the less."

"See if there is heat there now."

He placed his hand against the wall and was in the act of shaking his head in the negative, when he changed the gesture into a nod.

"There is a glow," he said. "The wall is getting warmer."

"What does it all mean?" she demanded.

"I think," he replied, "that it means that they are doing what you yourself suggested at the opening of our conversation on the subject."

"What is that?"

"I think they are using some scientific means of reaching the walls of this building before they actually arrive there themselves, with the tunnel."

"But the tunnel—the noises you heard, at least, are over there," she said, pointing toward the opposite side of the room.

"Yes."

"Then what does it mean to find this other operation going on, on this side?"

"I wish I could reply to your questions. I would then know how to act."

"I do nothing but bother you, do I?"

"You do bother me just a little at the present moment," he replied absently; and he did not see her start and draw back, then lift her head haughtily and glide away to her chair.

He had replied truthfully, however, for she did bother him with her constant questions.

He was using every effort in his power to think con-

nectedly, and to explain to himself the strange and incomprehensible noises he heard and could not understand.

Presently, he crossed over to the table again where Miriam was seated.

"You are not willing that I should introduce a third person into this place, are you?" he asked.

"No," she replied coldly, "I am not."

He had foreseen this reply to his question, but he had not expected to receive it in just that tone, and for a moment he stood staring at her in surprise. Then he said:

"I have somehow offended you, Miss Lee?"

"Yes, you have," she replied.

"Will you tell me how I did so?"

"You said that I bothered you."

"Did I say so? I was not conscious of it."

"You said it—and doubtless you meant to say it."

"Well, what are we going to do about it? Quarrel?"

"Did you mean it?"

"If I said it—I do not recall that I did say it—I must have meant it at the time."

"I was asking you questions."

"And I was trying to think."

"And so I did bother you."

"And so you must have bothered me."

"Well, I am sorry."

"And I am sorry that I was rude enough to say such a thing."

"Then we are friends again, aren't we?" she asked, rising and taking a step toward him.

"We will never cease to be that, Miriam."

"What was that that you were asking me just now about bringing a third person to this place?"

"It was merely a continuation of a thought I had in mind. I had been thinking deeply about what is going on outside these walls, and I recalled that bright suggestion of yours that there are doubtless expert engineers employed upon this work. Thinking in that line it occurred to me that if I had a first-class engineer here with me, he would speedily tell me what was going on out there."

"But you see how impossible it is to bring anybody else here, do you not?"

"Perfectly. I merely voiced a thought when I asked the question. Had you granted the wish I should have withdrawn it."

"You can do all that is necessary to be done, alone, can you not?"

"I think I can."

"It was my father's wish you know, that no person other than yourself should ever be introduced into this place, and not even you, unless the absolute necessity should arise."

"I know. I know."

"Still, if you think——"

"No, no; we will drop the idea altogether. If I am not able to cope with this thing alone, I will give up business and retire."

"I wish you would."

"You wish I would—what?"

"Give up your business and retire."

"Why do you wish that, Miriam?"

She was looking straight into his eyes, and she did not reply to his question.

Instead, she remained as she was, and so they gazed into each other's eyes for a full minute of time; then Miriam rose from her chair and crossed the room to the point at which they had first noticed the noises.

Then, with her back still toward him, she asked:

"Will you let me use that audiscope a moment?"

"Certainly. Here it is."

He carried it across the chamber to her, and she placed it in position against the wall just as she had seen him do it.

She had not as yet touched the wall with her hands, but now she leaned forward to rest one of her hands against the wall.

But the instant she touched it, she uttered a scream that ended in a moan. At the same time she seemed to spring into the air—and then she fell flat upon the floor, unconscious, still, apparently dead.

"Heaven!" cried the detective.

For a moment he was almost stunned by what had happened, but the next instant he bent over her senseless form; and then he seized her in his arms and ran with her to the stairs and up them to the upper vault, and then up again until he reached the office where there was better light.

Miriam was still unconscious when he placed her on the couch, but he saw that she was breathing, and he knew that she would soon recover consciousness; nevertheless, he had received a fright which he did not care to have repeated.

There was a pitcher of ice-water on the table, and with the contents of the pitcher he bathed her forehead and hands until, at last, she opened her eyes and looked up at him.

"What was it?" she asked faintly. "Were we attacked? Did some one strike me a blow?"

"Yes," replied the detective. "Some one did strike you a blow, and a hard one. It was very careless of me to permit you to use that 'scope and to put your hands against the wall."

"What was it? A shock?"

"Yes; an electirc shock, and a hard one, too."

"Those men in the ground must be using a great deal of power, don't you think so?"

"Yes, I do think so. I think more than that. The accident that has happened to you has told me a great deal."

"Then I am glad it happened. But what has it told you?"

"The men who are making the attack upon these vaults are making use of electricity to aid them. There is a disease to which metals are subject which is called electrolosis. I have heard that there is a method of imparting it to steel—of inoculating the metal with it, if I may use the expression. I think those men have bored through to the steel walls, in some manner, and that they are engaged in softening the steel ready for them to work upon, while at the same time they continue their steady approach through the tunnel."

"In other words they intend to have the door practically open to receive them when they arrive. Is that it?"

"That is about the idea—yes."

## CHAPTER V.

### NICK CARTER TAKES HIS TURN.

"But it would seem, would it not, that they are attacking all sides of the building at once?" asked Miriam.

"It would look that way, yes," replied the detective; "but it is not so, of course."

"Then how do you account for the steady tapping that we heard on one side of the lower chamber, at the same time the noises came from the other? How do you account for the difference in the location of the sounds we heard?"

"Easily."

"Please tell me about it, then, for I confess that I cannot understand it at all."

"It is accounted for by their use of electricity."

"Well, that doesn't explain it to me."

"This entire building, you must remember, is practically one piece of steel, it has also been harveyized, or hardened."

"Yes, I know that."

"Experience in the building of battle-ships has shown that steel will be harder, or softer, as the case may be, in one place than in another, although it has all been through exactly the same process."

"Well?"

"Those men outside are using electricity. The current will naturally follow the least resistance. If the steel is harder at one point than another, or softer at one point than at another, it is also possible that there are streaks in it which afford a better conductor for the electric fluid than another part does."

"I understand that."

"Well, wherever the electric current flows the most freely, there we will get the greater sound; don't you see?"

"Yes; but it changes."

"Doubtless, with the strength of the current."

"Then, as a matter of fact, we do not know at all upon which side of the building they are at work—save of course, they cannot be at work on the side nearest the main building of the mansion."

"Naturally that."

"But, as a matter of fact, you do not know any more about where they are at work now, than you did before you went down there?"

"I must confess that I do not, save that I have a general idea that they must be attacking the south side."

"I think that is more than likely. Is that where we heard the tapping?"

"Yes."

"Do you think you located that particular sound correctly?"

"I thought so at the time."

"What are you going to do now?" she asked, after a pause.

"Now, that you are better, I am going to ask you to remain here where you are, and rest a bit longer, while I return to the vault alone."

"You prefer to be alone, don't you?"

"For a short time—yes. I wish to study this thing a little, all by my little lonesome. You understand, do you not?"

"Perfectly. I will wait here for you. To tell you the truth, I don't feel any too strong since that shock. It was horrible, for the fraction of an instant."

"I won't be long," he said, as he left her; and then he descended the stairs a second time until he reached the lower vault.

That incessant tapping was still in operation, but what it indicated, the detective could not imagine. He was only sure of one thing, and that was that it was some sort of attack upon the walls of the building.

He knew, too, that the men who were making it had, without doubt, laid their plans with exceeding care and precision before they began operations, and therefore, that the attack was likely to succeed in the end if something was not done to stop it.

The audiscope itself was a non-conductor, for it was made principally of rubber, so he did not hesitate to bring it into use again, taking care, however, not to touch the walls with his hands while thus employed.

And now, as in the first instance after he entered the vault the first time, he went from place to place, listening and trying his best to locate the sounds.

But they puzzled him mightily—entirely, in fact.

At one point he thought that he could plainly distinguish the noise of a hammer striking against a drill.

"That is strange," he mused. "It cannot be possible that they mean to use a blast. Such a method would be fatal to their undertaking, for it would betray them."

He listened again, and finally decided that the noise

he thought made by a hammer was in reality made by a pick.

"I wish I knew the character of that soil," he mused. "I must examine into that to-morrow, without fail."

Again he found himself wondering how the men in the earthway procured their electric current.

Then it occurred to him that he had made no effort at all to listen at the walls of the upper vault, and he at once returned to that chamber; but there the noises were by no means as distinct. He could barely hear them at all.

"Twelve feet plus ten feet," he mused, thinking of the depth of the respective chambers, "are twenty-two feet. It is plain that those fellows are working at a depth of about twenty feet below the surface. Now that is not very deep unless they take great care to shore up as they proceed; but I suppose, of course, they do that.

"But where do they come from? How long is that tunnel? Where does it begin? How am I to find out where it begins? Those are questions which I must answer, and at once."

He descended again to the lower vault, and was conscious of a sense of oppression as he did so, as if the air had become vitiated, although he knew that was impossible; and then it occurred to him that the whole place was surcharged with electricity.

"By Jove!" he thought, "they must be using a powerful current out there. I wonder if they have tapped an electric-light wire, or if they are operating a dynamo of their own somewhere. The latter would seem to be the more likely course for them to adopt—but where would they put it if they had it?"

He tried to recall every spot and place around the neighborhood; he tried to remember every building in that locality and to go through them in his mind's eye, but among them all he could select no place that seemed to him a likely one for those men to have chosen as a base of operations.

It was all exceedingly mystifying; all exceedingly annoying.

For once in his life Nick Carter was placed in a position where, knowing approximately the location of the men he wished to find, he nevertheless did not understand how to begin a search for them.

"It's as plain as day," he muttered to himself, as he seated himself for the twentieth time at the table, "that I can ascertain absolutely nothing by remaining inside the box. I must work from the outside."

And a little later he mused aloud again:

"I wonder if Tesla is in town. I wonder if he has not in his possession an instrument like this one, only a great deal larger; the same one, for instance, with which he tried to communicate with Mars. By Jove, I think I'll look him up in the morning!"

Then he started to his feet suddenly.

Something very like an explosion—that is, a muffled sound such as would be made by a blast that was set off under the earth—came to his ears.

"They are daring to blast their way here," he thought. "I suppose with very small blasts, not large enough to cause a perceptible jar, or to make a sound that would attract attention. They are banking on the idea that their presence would not be suspected, and that if a sound were heard, nobody would pay any attetnion to it in these days of blasts everywhere. Possibly there may be another in a moment. I will listen."

He approached the wall at the side of the chamber from which he believed the blast to have come, and placing the audiscope against it again, seated himself in a chair and applied his ear.

Now he thought he could very plainly hear the noise of digging.

It seemed to be much plainer than before, and he became as interested in listening as one becomes absorbed in a book that is filled with exciting pages.

Then the noise of digging ceased again.

Afar off he could hear a punk-punk-punk! against the earth or the rock.

It was a different sound from any that he had heard before, and he listened with greater interest until, suddenly, he smiled.

"I know," he mused. "They are tamping for another blast. Now I will get this one, and it is more than likely that I will be able definitely to locate it. I only hope that I can."

The tamping continued for a long time and then was followed by an interval of silence.

"They are arranging the fuse now, I suppose," he thought. "I will not have to wait long now."

Then the tamping began over again, and he thought that it did not proceed from exactly the same quarter.

"Hello!" he thought, "they are going to arrange for two of them at the same time, or at least, one shortly after the other."

For fifteen minutes by his own watch he listened to that steady tamping, until he made up his mind that it was not tamping at all, but some other sound.

"Still," he mused, "if they have encountered a bit of hard rock, they have simply got to blast their way through it and that is all about it. It must be mighty slow work, for they dare not use a blast strong enough to do much execution."

Then the second tamping—if tamping it were—ceased and another long interval of silence ensued; and then:

"Pung!" came one report; and after a moment it was followed by another.

The detective removed the audiscope from the wall, and leaned back in his chair.

He sat there for a moment, and then rising, he walked

backward toward the table, keeping his eyes fixed upon a certain portion of the wall.

He reached the table, and still with his eyes fixed upon that particular point, he drew a pad of paper toward him and rapidly sketched upon it the square of the building, marking with a cross the exact point from which he believed the sound of the blast had proceeded.

"There!" he said, when that was done, "I think by going outside this building in the morning and studying this rather rude plan that I can come pretty near to standing directly above the point where those blasts went off. It is a fortunate thing that they sent off two, for now I am doubly certain.

"The tamping of the two blasts sounded in different localities, but the blasts came from the same quarter. Now, one little time more of listening, and then I will return to Miriam."

Again he made use of the audiscope, and now he was certain that he could hear the sounds of picks against the hard soil, or rock, whichever it might be.

And then, somehow—he never quite understood how it happened—he put out one hand and it came in contact with the smooth metal wall of the building—and clung there.

He tried to cry out, but he could not.

He felt as if his vitals were being torn out of him; as if every muscle in his body was being stretched to its utmost tension; as if the world were coming to an end.

With one mighty effort, then, he tore himself free from that awful grasp, and then, racked in body and in spirit, he staggered toward the stairway.

How far toward it he got, he did not know, for the room seemed to whirl around with him.

And then, with a shuddering moan of agony, he pitched forward on his face at the foot of the stairs and lay there, still and motionless—apparently dead.

And just at that same moment the figure of Miriam appeared at the top of the stairs.

## CHAPTER VI.

### AN UNINVITED PASSENGER.

When Nick Carter opened his eyes to consciousness, he was stretched upon the couch in the office where not so very long before that time he had placed the unconscious form of Miriam.

And now it was she who was bending over him and administering to him.

"I got it that time, didn't I?" he murmured weakly.

"I should say you did!" she replied, overjoyed to see that he was coming around all right, for in the first frenzy of her fright, when she saw him from the top of the stairs as he swayed and fell to the floor, she believed that he was dead.

After a moment Nick looked wonderingly around him.

"Isn't this the office?" he asked, then.

"Yes. Certainly."

"I was down in the lower vault when I received the shock, wasn't I?"

"Yes."

"Will you tell me how in the world I got here?"

"I brought you here."

"*You! You* brought me here?"

"Yes."

"What do you mean? That you carried me up two flights of stairs to this room? You? Alone, and unaided?"

"Well, I don't know that I exactly carried you. I think I dragged you more than carried you. But then I was frightened, you know. I thought you were dead."

"Oh! Did you?"

"I was at the top of the next stairs. I saw you fall. I thought you had been killed. I did not know what had happened. I ran down there. I don't know what I did then, but somehow I managed to get you up here."

"It is wonderful how you could do it, Miriam. I don't understand it."

"Nor I; only that I was frightened. And, besides, you did the same for me, didn't you?"

"So I did. So I did. Just give me a swallow of that water, will you? And then I'll see if I cannot get up."

"You are not to get up just yet. You are to lie quite still."

"Oh, well, if you are going to be boss, I suppose I'll have to—but I'll take the water just the same."

She gave him the water, and then she said:

"Now, I want to ask you a question, and I want you to answer me truthfully."

"I'll make a valiant effort," he replied, smiling.

"When do you think those men would gain admittance to these vaults if they were left entirely to themselves?"

"You want a truthful answer?"

"Certainly."

"Very well, I haven't the slightest idea."

"Nonsense! That isn't what I mean."

"Then what do you mean?"

"Do you think there is the slightest danger of their completing their work to-night?"

"No, I do not."

"By to-morrow night?"

"No, nor then, either."

"Within a week?"

"Possibly."

"But you feel reasonably sure that they cannot do it to-night, don't you?"

"I am just as positive of it as I am that I am lying here looking up into the brownest eyes I ever saw in the world."

"There. That will do. You are getting decidedly better."

"Yes, I think I am."

"Now tell me what are your plans about catching those burrowers?"

"I haven't any plans as yet. I really don't know, Miriam."

"But what are you going to do next?"

"I am going to take my automobile in about fifteen minutes, and go home. You are not afraid here, are you, with the certain knowledge that a company of men are burrowing their way momentarily nearer to your strong boxes?"

"I was never afraid of anything in my life, Nick Carter—only when I saw you pitch head foremost to the floor down there a little while ago. I was afraid then."

"But you are sure that you will not be timid here in the house? If I thought you would be at all afraid——"

"Well, what would you do?"

"I would send Patsy and Ten-Ichi up here as soon as I get home, to stand guard for you."

"I don't want them, and I am not afraid. Truthfully, I was never afraid in my life. My father would not permit it."

"That was extremely wise of him. That was one of the teachings of my father, too. Now, Miriam, may I get up, please?"

"Do you think you are strong enough?"

"I am quite sure of it."

"Very well; try it."

Somewhat unsteadily, Nick got upon his feet; but once there, he took several rapid strides across the room and back again, and he repeated this exercise until he felt quite himself once more.

"Now, Miriam," he said, "I think we had best close up things for the night. What time is it?"

"Half-past twelve."

"Do you suppose that chauffeur of yours is about yet, to bring out my machine for me?"

"Certainly. Wait until I close the vaults."

She ran down the stairs and closed the vaults, and soon thereafter, the steel doors being open before them, they passed out into the library.

When a footman came to announce that Mr. Carter's automobile was ready for him, Nick said to Miriam:

"I think you will see me rather early in the day to-morrow."

"I hope that you will come to me as soon as you can," she replied.

"I believe," he continued, "that at last I have a very good idea of the location of the excavations that are being made outside the house. Those chaps had the nerve to set off a couple of blasts while I was down there on the watch. I suppose they thought everybody had retired for the night, and that the blasts would not be noticed. But I heard them with my audiscope, and I think I located them. That, by the way, is how I got that shock."

"How?"

"I must have forgotten myself and placed my hand against the steel walls. They must have a terrific current of electricity against those walls in their efforts to rot the steel so they can work it."

"Is that the way they do it?"

"That is one way."

"And when you come in the morning, and locate the place above ground, over where you believe they are working—what shall you do then?"

"I have not determined; but I think I shall dig."

"Dig?"

"Yes. I think that I shall ask you to call in a contractor and tell him that you want some sort of a building erected at just the point I shall indicate."

"You mean that you want a well dug, don't you?"

"Something like that. Now will you sleep as soundly as if you did not know what was going on under the ground?"

"Quite."

"And you will have no fears?"

"Not one. There is only one thing that I thought about a moment ago."

"What is that?"

"I was wondering if it would not have been wise for us to have removed the money and other things of value from that lower vault, to the one above it, before we left there for to-night."

"Not a bit of it, Miriam. There is no more likelihood that those men will get into the vaults to-night than there is that I will return and do it for them."

"Of course, if you think that——"

"I feel very positive of that much, at least. And now I must say good night."

"Good night, Mr. Carter."

The detective stepped into his car and was soon speeding down the avenue toward his own home.

He felt very much more shaken than he had admitted, for the shock he received had been an awful one; so terrific, in fact, that a man less strong than he was, must have succumbed to it.

But the rush of his machine through the night, the cool, invigorating, and bracing air, and his own great will-power soon pulled him out altogether, so that by the time he was half-way home, he was quite himself again.

And then, suddenly, he became conscious of another presence near him.

Reader, did you ever experience that uncanny feeling, which tells you as plainly as words could do, that there is another person near you, and that at a time when you have believed yourself to be entirely alone?

For where could the detective have been more alone than in his big Peerless car, speeding at a thirty-mile clip along the boulevard?

It must not be forgotten that he was still in a half-dazed condition when he entered his car. It had not occurred to him then to look into the big tonneau of his machine; but if he had done so, he would have discovered a figure that was crouching there under the blanket which the man had pulled down over him.

And it was the presence of this man that Nick became suddenly conscious of, for the man had risen slowly in his place behind the detective and was now standing over him.

It was a sixth and an unknown sense that saved Nick Carter then, for he heard no sound of any kind, and there was nothing whatever to acquaint him with the danger he was in save that chill down his neck, that uncanny sensation already referred to, that something which cannot be defined.

The Peerless was flying along Lafayette Boulevard at the time, and was almost at the turn at One Hundred and Sixty-fifth Street, where the boulevard turns into Broadway around a double bend; and the machine was cutting out at least thirty-five miles an hour, for the hour was late, the night was chill, the road was deserted, and Nick had no thought of interruption for exceeding the speed limit.

But now that sensation came upon him.

The instant he felt it, he acted.

He threw himself sideways and to the left, at the same time sliding as far down under the steering-wheel as he could go—and so, he saved his life.

The blow that would have fallen upon his head otherwise would unquestionably have crushed his skull like an egg-shell, but as it was it fell upon the steering-wheel.

The instrument with which the blow was dealt was a monkey-wrench; but it missed its aim and fell harmlessly upon the wheel where, instead of shattering anything, it broke itself short off at the handle.

And the impetus of the blow caused the man who dealt it to pitch forward, so that now as Nick came up again in the other seat and turned, he was able to seize the assailant in his own giant-grip and to hold him there while at the same time he grasped the steering-wheel of the car just in time to save the machine from utter wreck.

It was no easy matter for the detective to hold that struggling wretch with one hand, and at the same time to shut off the power of the automobile and stop her, all the while keeping her in the road; but he did it with no worse results than half overturning in the ditch.

And then, as the machine came to a stop, the detective turned to look at the man he had captured.

## CHAPTER VII.

### A MOST FORTUNATE CAPTURE.

What he saw was an unkempt, haggard-looking rascal, quite evidently a foreigner.

The fellow wore no hat at all. His head was covered with a shock of thick, black hair which came down over his forehead almost into his eyes—and these were red and bloodshot.

His forehead retreated; his nose was flat, almost like a negro's, and his lips were thick and almost bloodless.

His face was grimy with dirt; his hands were swollen and calloused; he wore a dirty blouse, which looked as if he had not removed it for weeks, and altogether he was about as repulsive an appearing individual as can be imagined.

And now that he was captured, he seemed to resign himself placidly to whatever fate might have in store for him.

But the detective did not propose to argue with him there, or to take the time, on that cold and desolate road, to inquire into the reason for the assault.

Indeed, after he had taken a good look at the man, Nick did not say a word, but handcuffed the fellow at wrist and ankle, and tumbled him unceremoniously back again into the tonneau.

Then he said:

"I don't intend to hurt you, although you tried to kill me. I am going to take you to my house where I can question you—not to prison, as you suppose. If you make a sound, or cry out at all, it will be the worse for you. I advise you to keep perfectly still."

He sprang into the driver's seat of the car again, and brought the Peerless back into the road.

He was not long in reaching his own home after that, and as he drove the machine up to the curb, he tooted the signal with his horn to call two of his assistants out to him.

Chick and Ten-Ichi came out in reply to the signal, and to the latter he gave the machine to be taken around to the garage, while with the assistance of Chick, the strange captive was borne into the house.

"Where did you find it?" asked Chick, looking down upon the dirty specimen of a man with undisguised disgust.

"Along the road on my way home," replied the detective. "He tried to smash my head with a monkey-wrench—but he failed."

"Where was he?"

"He had hidden himself inside the tonneau. I didn't notice that he was there until he was on the point of braining me, and then I turned on him."

He turned to the captive again, then, and was about to address him when he saw that the fellow was almost in a fainting condition.

"Get me a little brandy and water, Chick. This chap needs it, I think."

The dose was quickly administered, and the captive looked his gratitude. He had not expected such consideration at the hands of his captors.

"Now, my man," said the detective, as soon as he saw that the captive was in a condition to answer questions, "why did you try to brain me?"

The captive looked at him without replying, and it was plain that he had not understood a word that had been uttered.

"Hello!" said Nick. "He doesn't understand English."

"He's French, I think," suggested Chick; and the detective addressed him again in French.

The eyes of the man brightened again at that, and he responded at once.

"Why did you try to brain me?" asked Nick a second time.

"I only meant to stun you," was the somewhat sullen reply. "I did not mean to kill you."

"But why did you wish to stun me? Why did you attack me at all?"

"I was afraid that you would give me up to the police."

"For what? Why should I give you up?"

"Because I had stolen a ride in your car."

"Ah, yes. Now where were you when you got inside the car? Eh?"

"In the garage—up there—where you left the car."

"Do you mean that you were hidden—that you were concealed there, in that garage?"

"Yes."

"Is that where you got the monkey-wrench with which you attacked me?"

"Yes."

"How long a time had you been there?"

"Three days."

*"What?"*

"It is true, sir. Three days."

"All the time hidden in that garage?"

"No; not all the time in the garage, but all the time hidden somewhere around there. I went there three days ago, and I have not dared to leave there since. This was the first and only chance I had, and I was and am almost starved."

"Why were you there?"

"I was watching."

"Watching whom? Watching what?"

"Watching the house—the big house and the people in it."

"Why were you watching?"

"Because I was ordered to do so."

"Who gave you the order?"

"Baptiste Lafarge."

"Who is Baptiste Lafarge?"

"He is the man I have to obey—the man whom we all have to obey. He holds us in the hollow of his hand."

The detective ceased for a moment his questioning, trying to recall where lately he had seen or heard the name of Baptiste Lafarge—and in a moment it came to him.

Miriam Lee had in her possession a book which had been kept by her father at the time he was engaged in erecting that wing of his house under which the vaults were located. The book in question contained the name of every man who had been employed upon that work, and now the detective remembered that it was among that list of names that he had seen this particular one mentioned by the captive.

"Baptiste Lafarge," he mused. "Yes, I recall it now."

Then he turned to the captive again.

"What is your name?" he demanded; and when the man hesitated, he added:

"Let me assure you that you need have nothing whatever to fear from me if you answer my questions frankly and if you tell me all the truth. On the contrary, you shall have all you want to eat, you shall have fresh clothing; you shall have money, and if you tell me everything that I shall ask you, I will secure you a passage back to your own country if you wish to return there."

"Anywhere but there, monsieur," replied the man. "I am wanted there. I dare not return to France, particularly if I offend Lafarge."

"Where, then, would you care to go?"

"To South America. To Argentina, monsieur."

"Then it shall be to Argentina. I will send you there, and with money in your pockets, too, and plenty of it, if you will tell me all you know."

"You swear it?"

"I swear it."

"On the cross?"

"Yes, if you so desire."

"Then give me food and drink first, and permit me to wash some of this filth away. After that I will talk."

The detective turned to his assistant.

"Take him in hand, Chick," he said. "You and Patsy can attend to him. When he is ready bring him to my study."

Half an hour later—two o'clock in the morning it was—when the captive appeared before the detective washed and dressed in clothing that Chick had provided for him. The detective scarcely knew him, so great was the change.

The face was still coarse, sullen, and repulsive, but there was intelligence of an unusual quality in his eyes, and his air indicated that he was a man of no mean abilities.

"Are you feeling somewhat better, now?" asked the detective.

"Decidedly so, thank you, monsieur," was the reply.

"And are you prepared to talk?"

"I am."

"You do understand English, do you not?"

"Perfectly. I speak it as well as French."

"Very good, then we will talk United States, if you don't mind."

"It is all one to me, monsieur."

"Now what is your name? Tell me who you are."

"Is it necessary that I should?"

"It will assure me of your desire to be frank with me," replied Nick.

"And may I rely upon your promise, monsieur?"

"You may. Absolutely and entirely."

"My name is Jules Gevrais."

"Ah! A relative of Jean Gevrais?"

"A brother."

"Were you also a workman in the employ of Burleigh Lee, long ago?"

"No; my brother was, but not I."

"But you are concerned in this plot of Baptiste Lafarge's, to rob the vaults of that old mansion, are you not?"

"What! You know that?"

"I know many things. Answer me."

"Yes. With Baptiste; not with my brother. He stole a march on us."

"So that is it, is it?"

"Yes. I am in the power of Baptiste. I am wanted in France. I am wanted here. My picture has been sent broadcast all over the world, I think. I need not tell you about the crime, eh? You do not care to hear about that, do you?"

"No. But I want to know about this affair."

"You shall know everything that I can tell you."

"That's the way to talk; and you shall receive everything that I promise you."

"Thank you, monsieur."

"First, tell me why you were watching there, outside the house?"

"To discover who entered and left it. To learn the habits of the members of the household; to know everything possible about them so that when the time comes for the final assault, there will be no working in the dark."

"And how happens it that you were there three days almost without food?"

"Because Baptiste forgot me, I suppose. It was easy enough to get inside because I was assisted over the wall, but I found it impossible to get out again. I was near to despairing when I saw you drive into the grounds with your big car. I saw that you were alone; that your tonneau was empty, and I knew, when you stayed there so late, that you would return as you came. I saw then my opportunity to escape from the grounds and from Baptiste at the same time."

"And so you concealed yourself in the tonneau?"

"Yes, monsieur. I was bound to get away if I could. I would not remain in the power of that man for all the millions he believes he will take from those vaults. It was my opportunity."

"And you seized it."

"I stole my way into the garage. I found the monkey-wrench. I climbed into the tonneau and hid myself under the blanket. I am a chauffeur myself, and I thought if I could capture the machine—but you know the rest, monsieur."

"Yes, I know the rest," said the detective.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### NICK CARTER'S INSPIRATION.

"I was very weak for lack of food, or I doubt if you could have captured me so easily," said Gevrais, with sudden egotism.

"Probably not," replied Nick dryly. "Now let's get back to business. How did you manage to keep yourself hidden while you were concealed there in the grounds and around the house. Eh?"

"In the loft over the stable. It is not much used now. They keep no horses now. I was quite comfortable there at first, for I had food and several bottles of red wine to slake my thirst. Baptiste was to send more, and I put the rope over the wall at night; but nobody came near it with supplies. I would have climbed out and gone away, but the rope was not strong enough to sustain me."

"What I cannot understand," said Nick, "is why it was necessary for you to be there at all."

"It was a part of Baptiste Lafarge's plans."

"But he is tunneling through the earth to get at the vaults, is he not?"

"Yes."

"Then why was it necessary that you should watch the house?"

"For one thing, monsieur, to discover if there was any unusual excitement there which would indicate that his work had been suspected."

"I can understand that."

"And for another thing to learn thoroughly the lay of the land, as I said before. That and the habits of the inmates of the house."

"But why? How would that aid you?"

"Because it is intended, when everything is in readiness, to make a descent upon the house itself at the same time they break into the vaults."

"Oh! So that is the game, eh?"

"Yes. It is intended to capture—and to kill, if neces-

sary—every person inside that mansion at the time when the descent is made; at the time when they break through into the vaults."

"Why?"

"Lafarge means to leave nothing undone. He means to succeed, although I see now that he could not have done so, for you already know about his plans."

"About part of them, yes; but not all."

"I fear that I cannot add much to your information. Lafarge did not take me into his confidence to any very great extent."

"Where is the entrance to the tunnel he is digging?"

"I do not know, monsieur."

"*What?* You do not know? Be careful, my man!"

"I speak truth. I do not know. Lafarge does not trust me."

"He trusted you far enough to send you to those grounds alone, and to leave you there."

"What of that? He knows that I am wanted by the police. He knows that I would not dare show my face in the streets of New York. He knows that I cannot betray the location of the tunnels he is making——"

"Tunnels! Is there more than one tunnel?"

"There are three, monsieur."

"Humph!" thought the detective. "That accounts, in part, for the difference in the location of the sounds I heard." Aloud he said:

"Go on with what you were saying."

"There is little more to be said on that point. I suspect that Lafarge knew perfectly well that I could not leave those grounds without being discovered, and that he purposely let me starve awhile. Perhaps to-night—before daylight—he will go there, or send there, to aid me. He likes to torture me. He hates me."

"And you do not love him."

"No, monsieur, I do not love him."

"What will happen when he sends there and finds that you have abandoned your post?"

"He will go to the police department in the morning and inform them there that Jules Gevrais is at large in the city. He will——"

"What? Do you really believe that he will do that?"

"I really do. He has the cheek of the devil, has Lafarge. And he has the courage of a lion, and the heart of a jackal, and the soul of a snake. He is a Goliath in strength, and a Machiavelli in brain, a Cagliostro for wit, and a Satan for cold cruelty."

"You give him a good character."

"He has a hundred characters—and a hundred lives, I think. I have tried to kill him over and over again, but always I have failed."

"Was he one of the original workmen on the place?"

"Yes; and the most expert of all. None can match him in his craft of making locks."

"And how comes it that your brother, Jean, did not conspire with him?"

"Jean preferred his own way—and he got it."

"Precisely—just as Baptiste Lafarge will get his a little later; eh?"

"I see it now, monsieur. I am glad that I found the monkey-wrench. Otherwise I would not be here."

"You give your fortunes a strange twist, Gevrais. Do you know how many men Lafarge has with him, assisting him?"

"Do you refer to the conspirators, or to those who are doing the work?"

"To both; but you may speak of them separately."

"I am not certain. I can only guess, but I think I can guess closely."

"Then do so."

"Of the conspirators I believe there are five, but I am not aware of any name save that of Lafarge himself."

"They have a headquarters somewhere in the city?"

"Yes."

"Where is it?"

"I do not know."

"Is that the truth?"

"It is the truth, monsieur."

"You seem, indeed, to have been kept out of their councils."

"I have only been here in the country a week."

"Ah! I did not understand that. And how did you find Lafarge?"

"I did not find him; he found me."

"How was that?"

"It was an accident. I met him face to face—in the night—under an electric light. He knew me at once, although I thought myself disguised. He said he recognized my walk. Perhaps that is true. At all events he stopped me, and said that he had use for me. I had to obey him. When he showed his teeth in the way he did, I knew that he would bite if I did not do as he commanded."

"Tell me about the workmen. You said you knew something about them."

"I know this, and this only: There are several miners and sappers who have been with the Spahis in Algiers. They are doing the heavy work of cutting the tunnel. I know, also, that there is Edouard Gerome."

"And who is Edouard Gerome?"

"Do you not know? The great engineer who was convicted of murder and sentenced to death, and who escaped. Ah! He was a great man. His fortune was ahead of him when he committed that crime all for the sake of a woman who had turned his head. Now, he is with Baptiste. I know that much."

"A great engineer, eh?"

"The greatest, for his age, who ever appeared in France."

"And it is he who is directing this work?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"What does Baptiste Lafarge do on his own account?"

"Who can say? He sits, like the devil, on a beam of light somewhere, and looks upon the proceedings with his satanic smile."

"It does not appear that you are aiding me very greatly."

"I am doing all that I can do. I would do more if I could."

"Have you no idea of the length of that tunnel? Or, rather, of those tunnels?"

"Of one of them, yes. It is half a mile long. Baptiste told me that much himself."

"And the others?"

"I know nothing about them."

"Don't you know enough to put me on the track for finding out more about them? Don't you know any of the men who are connected with the work?"

"I suppose I would know all of them if I could see them, but Lafarge has not given me an opportunity to do that."

"Where were you to see him after your watching was done? When your part of the work was completed?"

"He was to find me. He told me of a hut over there in a bit of wood. It belongs on another estate. I was to go there and wait. I would find word there for me, he said."

"And when were you to go there?"

"When he sent word to me to do so."

"How was he to send that word?"

"By the string which each night I was to throw over the wall. It was his part to attach a small basket to that string, with food and drink, and also with written directions what I was to do."

"At what part of the wall was that?"

"Just behind the stables; to the south of them. It is a deserted spot."

The detective started to his feet, hesitated a moment, and then asked:

"Where is that string that you were to use, Gevrais?"

"Under an old box that is beneath a currant-bush there where I was to drop it over the wall. There is a piece of lead attached to one end; a bit of lead that Lafarge put there himself. There is a note tied to the string now, that I was to send over the wall to him."

"And at what time in the night were you to do this?"

"Just before daylight each morning."

Nick started away again, and with an injunction to Chick to remain with their prisoner until he returned, he went into the next room to a telephone, closing the door behind him; for obvious reasons he did not care to use the phone that was in that room.

Hurriedly he asked for the number that would connect him with Miriam Lee's house, and told Central to continue to ring until there was an answer.

It came sooner than he had dared to hope.

"This is Mr. Carter," he said. "Who is there?"

"Miriam," came the soft reply, in her well-known voice.

"Good! Dare you do something for me that is very important?"

"I dare."

"Take old Harrison, or one of your footmen whom you can trust with you. Go out into your grounds as soon as—— Well, do it in exactly half an hour from now."

"Do what?"

"Go to the garden wall behind the stables, at the south of the stables a little. You will find a currant-bush there, and under the bush an old box. Under the box you will find a bit of cord with a piece of lead and a paper tied to one end of it."

"Yes."

"Throw the lead over the wall, but keep firm hold of your end of the string. After you have thrown it over the wall, wait for developments. There will be something tied to the other end of the string and that something you are to pull over to your side of the wall. I have no doubt that those on the opposite side will assist it to the top of the wall, and the box is for you to stand upon so that you can secure the basket without danger to the contents. After you have done this, return to the house and call me up on the phone. Can you do it, Miriam?"

"Yes," she replied.

## CHAPTER IX.

### A BARGAIN WITH A CROOK.

The detective hurried back again to the room where his captive and Chick were waiting.

"Lafarge will not know that you are not there," he said

"Why not?" asked Gevrais. "The string will not be lowered over the wall, and he will enter the grounds then, to see what is the matter."

"But the string will be lowered over the wall," said Nick.

"Who will do it?" asked Gevrais.

"That does not matter so long as it will be done—and it will be done."

"Lafarge was to whistle, and I was to reply."

The detective started violently.

"Any particular signal?" he demanded.

"Yes."

"What was it? Quick! Tell me!"

"He was to whistle one-half of the first bar of 'Narcissus,' and I was to finish it. That is all."

"Anything further?"

"Nothing."

The detective darted away again and in three minutes more he was again in commuication with Miriam.

"Do you know 'Narcissus'?" he asked abruptly.

"Whom did you say?" she replied.

"'Narcissus.' A tune. Listen. I will whistle the first bar of it over the phone."

"Yes."

He whistled it then, and it is to be regretted that it cannot be reproduced here.

"Did you hear it?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Is the air familiar to you?"

"Perfectly."

"Listen then. When the string is over the wall, the man on the other side will—— Gracious, I forgot! Can you whistle?"

"Certainly."

"Good! The man on the other side will whistle the first half of that bar I just gave you and you are to reply by whistling the remaining half of it. Can you do it?"

"Of course I can do it."

"And you are not afraid?"

"Not in the least."

"Have you a revolver handy?"

"Yes."

"Take it into the garden with you. Have it in readiness. If the man on the opposite side of the wall attempts to talk, do not answer. If he attempts to climb over the wall, *shoot him without mercy!* Will you do that."

"I don't know, Mr. Carter. Really——"

"You must promise me that you will. Your life depends upon your doing exactly as I say."

"I will obey."

"If he attempts to climb the wall, you will shoot him?"

"I will at least shoot at him."

"I wish I could be there with you, Miriam," said Nick.

"So do I, most heartily; but since you are not I will do the best I can."

Again the detective hung up the receiver and returned to the other room.

"I think now that I have arranged that little signal all right," he said. "Are you sure, Gevrais, that it will be Lafarge in person who will keep that tryst with you?"

"No. In fact, I doubt it. I think he will send one of his men."

"That will be all right then. I greatly fear that Lafarge—I mean for the one who is to go out to answer the signal and to secure your basket of provisions."

"He may not come at all. He has not done so for three nights."

"But if he does come it is safe to say that there will be instructions for you inside the basket, don't you think?"

"I do—yes."

"Now, tell me. Have any specific instructions been given you concerning the looting of the house at the time the vaults are entered?"

"Only what I have already told you. I know this much: When everything is in readiness to go through the walls of the vaults, that part of the work is to be done by Lafarge himself, assisted by the engineer and the three or four men who are directly associated with Baptiste. The others are to be let into the grounds and are to attack the house."

"How do they enter the grounds?"

"Through one of the tunnels, or branches of the tunnel. It is to come out very near to that place I have just described behind the stables."

"Well?"

"The house is isolated. Noises there cannot be heard far away, or if they are heard, will not be noticed. Lafarge counts upon that."

"And once inside the house?"

"The men—the workmen—are to have full swing. They are to be at liberty to take anything they covet—including the young lady."

"My God!"

"It is true, sir."

"And then the looting is to be done at their leisure. It may take all day to pack all the plunder they expect to get, and possession of the house and of the people in it was deemed necessary for the perfect success of the undertaking. There is a schooner yacht anchored or moored somewhere near there—I do not know where it is—but everything is to be taken aboard that schooner. There is to be left no trace whatever of the robbery; that is, of the men who commit it."

"What a devilish—what a hellish plot!" exclaimed Chick; but Nick did not notice the interruption.

"Gevrais," he said, "how long has Lafarge been engaged on this affair?"

"Five years he told me."

"How long?"

"Five years all told. And he has spent an immense amount of money. He has a regularly organized company in which each has taken so many shares according to the amounts of money they have supplied. It has been plotted and planned and schemed a very long time. I think that Lafarge has always had it in mind ever since he worked on the place twenty odd years ago; but he did not dare to make any real effort in that direction until after the death of the man who built the house."

"And have you any idea how much money he expects to gain by his plans?"

"Only what I heard in Paris before I came over here."

"And what did you hear there?"

"I was told by one of my associates over there that

when Lafarge returned he would be worth two hundred and fifty million francs. That is all."

"Fifty million dollars, eh? Well, he has not a bad idea of it."

"It is a vast sum, monsieur, and well worth working for."

"Gevrais," said the detective, paying no heed to this last remark, "have you told me the exact truth when you say that you have no idea whatever where the entrance to the tunnel, or to any one of them, is located?"

"Pardon me, monsieur, but that is not what I said."

"What did you say?"

"I said that I did not *know* where they were located."

"And does that mean that you *have* an idea about it?"

"I have been a crook all my life, monsieur, and I have associated with other crooks all that time—*and* I was not born yesterday."

"I understand you now. I have told you that I would send you away from the country on a ship and that I would give you money, after this was done, have I not?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Well, now I have a proposition to make to you."

"Yes, monsieur."

"I will first disguise you so that there will not be the slightest danger that even Lafarge will recognize you if he should see you. Then—after that—if you can take me to any place in the city where I can find an entrance to one of those tunnels——"

"I think they all start from the same place, monsieur."

"Very well. If you can find for me the entrance to the tunnels, I will send you away with twenty-five thousand dollars—a hundred thousand francs—in your pockets."

"In gold, or in paper, monsieur?"

"In either that you desire, only that I think you would find it difficult to carry that much gold around with you. Do you think you can accomplish what I ask you to do?"

"I can at least try."

"Have you an idea about it?"

"Yes; and a very good one."

"Good! When should we set about the work?"

"Now. At once. As soon as you can disguise me. But first, monsieur, how do I know that you will stand to your agreement about that great amount of money?"

"You will have to take my word for it. That is something that Nick Carter was never——"

"Mon Dieu! Are *you* Nick Carter?"

"Yes," replied the detective, smiling. "Did you not know it?"

"I had no idea of it. I have heard about you in Paris. It is enough, monsieur. I will take your word, and I will be proud to serve you. Perhaps some day you will do me a favor."

"Perhaps," replied Nick. "Chick, will you attend to the arrangement of some disguise for Gevrais, please? I will continue my talk with him."

The assistant at once set about his task, and Nick continued:

"Have you any idea *when* Lafarge expects to gain an entrance to the vaults?"

"No; only that I know the work is almost done."

"That would seem to be true, otherwise he would not have set you to watching the house."

"It was what he said at the time he put me there."

"What did he say? What were his exact words?"

"He spoke in idioms. He said, 'The cherries are almost ripe, Jules. They are about to fall into our laps. We will strip the tree of its choicest fruits, and that before you are many days older.'

"'And how many of the cherries do I get?' I asked.

"'Bah!' he replied, 'you will get all that you deserve, and more.'

"'A hundred thousand francs?' I asked him.

"'What!' he cried. 'Do you expect a fortune? Ten thousand, perhaps, if you are very good and very faithful. Not more than that.'

"'And you get millions,' I told him.

"'What of that?' he demanded. 'Do I not do the work? Do I not supply the money? Ought I not to have the choicest cherries on the tree? And they will soon fall; they will soon fall into our laps, Jules!' That is what he said about it, monsieur."

"It will be daylight by the time we start out," said Nick.

"And that, monsieur, will be just the time, for the workmen will be quitting then, and they as well as Lafarge will be seeking rest after their labors of the night. There could be no hour in the twenty-four so good for our purposes as that one just after it is light."

"And you believe that you can find the tunnel, do you?"

"I hope that I can. Yes, I believe that I can. I am shrewd. I know the methods of Lafarge—and I was not born yesterday, monsieur."

"So you observed once before."

## CHAPTER X.

### MIRIAM LEE'S PERIL.

The detective announced that he would be ready in fifteen minutes, and then he left the room, for, having had no sleep, he did wish to take one plunge into his tub before he started out; and that he did. Just a dip in cold water and a thorough rubbing restored his vitality wonderfully.

Short as was the time that he was absent from the room, he paused in astonishment when he entered it again, for Chick had not only completed his labors, but he

had also made himself up in perfect imitation of what Gevrais had been when he was brought to the house.

In some inexplicable way he had managed even to reproduce the flat nose, the fishy eyes, the thick lips, and the shock head of black hair, so repulsive; and as his chief came into the room he took a shuffling step forward, exactly as Gevrais had walked, and in Gevrais' voice, he said:

"Do you think that I will do, monsieur?"

Nick Carter laughed aloud.

"It is capital, Chick," he replied. "But what is it for?"

"I had an idea that it might be worth something to us—and besides, it lessens the opportunity for Lafarge to recognize Gevrais."

"It is the most wonderful thing I ever saw, monsieur," said Gevrais admiringly. "If I could do that, I would not fear all the police on the Continent."

"No, I suppose not. It is fortunate, therefore, that you cannot do it," said Chick.

"We will take the automobile," said Nick, "and we will walk around to the garage. A little exercise will do us all good."

And so the three left the house together, Nick Carter being the only one who did not wear a disguise.

He did not know—and he cared less—if he were known to the man, Lafarge.

What he did realize was that the only way in which the burrowers in the earth—the only way in which the mysterious treasure-hunters could be caught, would be to trap them in their den, wherever that might be.

This was not a detective case, pure and simple, but rather a campaign against a subtle and strengthened force that had been five years or more in its preparations.

When they entered the automobile and started uptown, Nick asked Gevrais what he knew about the engineering part of the enterprise.

"I know," he said to the crook, "that they are making use of electricity in their work."

"That would be natural since Edouard Gerome is as great an electrician as your Edison."

"Hardly that, I think."

"It was said of him before he committed his crime and was sentenced for it, that he would one day be a greater man."

"Then we may assume that he is manufacturing his own power, somehow."

"I think so. That is my idea of it, monsieur. Gerome is a great man. He once discovered—or at least he announced that he had discovered a method for rotting steel so that it would crumble in your fingers; so that you could dig the hardest steel with the point of a knife as if it were a piece of wood. I know nothing about it myself, but I remember when he made the announcement, the savants of Paris laughed at him—and then, shortly after that, he sold his invention to the government for a great sum of money, for the government feared it."

"Then that must be the method he is employing here."

"There is no doubt of that. That is also why Lafarge assisted him in his escape from prison."

"So it was Lafarge who took him out of prison, was it?"

"Yes, monsieur. Having in view this great undertaking, and knowing that Gerome possessed the secret that would render his task comparatively easy, he set about liberating the only man who could do it for him."

"And how did he liberate him?"

"How, indeed? With the only key that will unlock prison doors from the wrong side. It is made of gold."

"But according to all that you tell me, Lafarge must be half made of gold, also."

"He has money. Great amounts of it—for this purpose. Did I not say that he had organized a regular company in which each of the members took shares?"

"I believe you did."

"What I tell you now, monsieur, is not of my own knowledge, but is the result of rumors that reached me in Paris before I came here at all. You know that among the thieves of Paris there is—well, there is a fellow-feeling that impels them to help one another. Over there, among the thieves, it is well known what Lafarge is doing."

"And how he is doing it, also, I suppose."

"To some extent."

"Then suppose you tell me what those rumors were?"

"That he had liberated Gerome to aid him in his work; that Gerome had purchased a great quantity of material there which he had shipped to this country; machinery I suppose it was; that they had purchased a factory site somewhere over here from which they intended to work, and——"

"A factory site!" exclaimed the detective. "Of course! Why did I not think of that before this?"

"It did not occur to you, monsieur. One cannot think of everything at once."

"A factory site! Do you know what sort of a factory?"

"Yes, monsieur. That is what gave me my idea by which I hope to earn one hundred thousand francs."

"Good! You shall not lose them if you guide us to the place. Now what sort of a factory is it, do you suppose?"

"It will not endanger my chances for earning the sum——"

"Confound it, no!"

"A factory for electrical novelties, and for dynamos —small ones, you understand. Just enough to cover the real work in which they are engaged."

"And, of course, it would be from this factory where they would begin their tunnel."

"Naturally, monsieur."

"So it cannot be very far from the Lee mansion."

"I recall that Lafarge said that one of the tunnels was half a mile in length."

"That's so."

"But Lafarge is not celebrated for his truthfulness. It might be much farther than that, and it might not be nearly so far, monsieur."

"Nevertheless, it should be near the river."

"One of the rivers, monsieur. There are two up there, are there not?"

"Yes; and they are about equally distant from the mansion, too."

"So I think we will have to investigate both of them if we do not discover what we are searching for at the first one."

"Gevrais, you are making yourself almost invaluable."

"It is my delight to do so, monsieur."

"I don't suppose you have the name that is above the door of this factory, at your tongue's end, have you?" asked Nick.

"I am aware of the name, if that is what you mean, monsieur."

"Confound you, why don't you tell it to me, then?"

"I have feared lest I might jeopardize my chances to earn the——"

"Gevrais, if you say that again, I'll be tempted to break your neck!"

"Even that, monsieur, would be preferable to having it cut in half by the guillotine—as would be the case if I were caught. But you have given me your word—the word of Nick Carter, and I know that I can rely upon that. Even among my associates in Paris, it is said that you are a great man who always keeps his word, whether it is to destroy, or save."

"I am glad that my reputation extends so far."

They were passing at that moment a hotel on One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street, and Nick suddenly recalled the fact that he had asked Miriam to telephone to him the moment her errand into the garden around the house was accomplished.

He had forgotten it in the hurry of his departure from the house, so now he brought the car to a sudden stop and leaped out.

"Wait here!" he ordered, and dashed into the hotel.

There were telephone-booths there, and he quickly sought one of them, and called for the number of Miriam's telephone.

For a long time there was no answer at all, but at last the voice of old Harrison responded.

"What is it?" he asked. His voice was still strong and resonant, notwithstanding his years.

"That you, Harrison?" asked the detective.

"Yes, sir."

"This is Mr. Carter. Ask your mistress to come to the phone at once, please."

"I think she is sleeping, sir."

"Never mind that. Rouse her."

"Yes, sir. Please hold the wire."

And Nick sat and held it a long time, becoming with each instant more and more impatient until at last the old man returned.

"Mr. Carter, sir?" he said.

"Yes, yes, Harrison. Go on!"

"Miss Lee is not in her room, sir. I cannot find her anywhere about the house. Her maid does not know where she is."

"Harrison!

"Yes, sir."

"I want you to do something for me, and to do it exactly as I say—precisely as I tell you to do it. Will you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Put down the receiver and go into the garden. Go out to the stables. Go to the south side of the stables near the wall. You will find a currant-bush there with a box under it, or near it."

"Yes, sir."

"Hurry there, and then hurry back to the telephone, and tell me what you find. Don't ask questions now, but go."

Nick could hear the old man as he hurried away from the telephone. He could even hear the closing of the

door when he went out of the house; and then came what seemed to be an interminable period of waiting.

Minutes seemed like hours to the detective then, for he knew in his heart that something had happened and he almost cursed himself for having sent Miriam out into the night alone.

And then he heard the door again, and the sound of Harrison as he hurried to the telephone.

"Mr. Carter, sir?" he called.

"Yes, yes. What is it? What did you find?"

"There is a basket there on the ground, sir. It contains some bread, and cheese, and some bottles of red wine."

"Well? Well?"

"Miss Miriam's fur collar is lying there beside the basket, and also I found her small revolver—one that her father gave to her long ago. I have brought that inside with me."

"Has it been discharged, Harrison? Look at it, and tell me."

"Yes, sir; two chambers."

"Harrison, go to the front gate and wait for me. I will be there in fifteen minutes."

"Yes, sir."

The detective rushed out of the hotel and into his seat under the wheel.

Then, without a word to either of his companions, he opened up the Peerless, and in a moment they were dashing along the streets at a rate of speed which threatened each moment to wreck the machine.

And he was driving as straight as he could go for the home of Miriam Lee.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MIRIAM.

Old Harrison was at the gate, waiting, and he threw it open as they approached so that the detective drove his machine inside almost without slacking speed.

Once inside, however, he came to a stop and leaped to the ground with a word to Chick to look out for the automobile.

He was turning away toward the stables when the look of agony on the face of old Harrison compelled him to pause out of sheer pity for his suffering.

He put his arm affectionately around the old man's shoulder and said to him:

"You must not worry, Harrison. I really do not believe we have cause for genuine alarm. I must hurry now, and you must return to the house and await me there. Remember that everything is in your charge for the present."

"But where is she, sir? What has happened? Tell me that."

"I do not know yet. That is what I am here to find out."

"What could have taken her——"

The old man ceased speaking, for the detective had darted away on the run toward the stables, and in another moment he was bending low over some traces of footprints that he discovered there in the soft soil.

There were some that were Miriam's plainly enough, and there were others that had been made by Harrison when he was sent out there to investigate, at the command of the detective; and there were also others, and these Nick knew were strange.

He could see deep marks made by the heels of boots where their owner had leaped down from the top of the wall into the garden.

One thing that rather surprised him was that there were no signs of a struggle.

He knew that Miriam was what might be called an athletic girl, and he did not believe that she was one who would readily submit to capture or to an indignity of any kind.

Nick had forgotten to ask Harrison for the pistol, but now the old man hurried up behind him, and was on the point of commencing another volume of questions when the detective stopped him.

"Harrison," he said, "there is one thing that you must not do just now. You *must not* do any talking. It confuses me, and just now I require all my wits."

"Very well, sir."

"Give me that pistol you found here."

Harrison produced it in silence, and gave it to Nick.

It was as the old man had said. Two chambers had been emptied, and Nick could tell easily enough that the weapon had been recently discharged.

But he smiled grimly when he looked at it for all that, for it was a little weapon of a twenty-two caliber.

"If I had supposed that Miriam called that thing a revolver, I would have suggested that she go out unarmed," he mused. And then he gave it back into Harrison's hand.

The box, which has been frequently mentioned, was

standing close to the wall, and now Nick stood upon it.

Standing thus, he could reach with his hands perhaps a foot above the top of the wall, and he now noticed for the first time that at that point the spikes with which the wall had once been provided had here been knocked away so that there was nothing to prevent a man from scaling it.

"It's a bit odd that Gevrais found it impossible to leave the garden," he thought, as he examined the place. "I'll ask him about that—if I think of it."

He seized the top of the coping and pulled himself up with his hands, and then did a feat of athletics which many a man would have envied him, could it have been seen; that is, he threw his elbows out and forced his body on up along the side of the wall until he was breast-high above it.

There was no street on this side of the garden. Once there had been a wood, but that had long since disappeared, so that now the place was merely an open tract, rough and uneven, and exceedingly rocky.

He noticed with some surprise that there was a pathway along the base of the wall, and he could see that there were footprints there, also.

Lifting himself to the top of the wall, he turned and called to Harrison:

"Go back to the automobile," he said, "and tell the two men who were with me that I wish them to skirt the wall on the outside, and to join me here. Tell them to make haste."

The old man sped away on his errand, and Nick leaped to the ground.

He had thought from the top of the wall that he could see the imprint of Miriam's boot-heel in the pathway, and now he made sure of it; also he could determine that at least two men had been there at the time she was captured.

"If only I had Pedro here!" he murmured aloud, thinking of his bloodhound that had so often assisted him in emergencies of this kind.

But Pedro was not there, and there was no time to wait until he might be brought, so the detective merely stood with folded arms awaiting the coming of Chick and Gevrais.

And presently they came.

Chick, it will be remembered, was the reproduction of what Gevrais had been at the time Nick Carter captured him, while Gevrais himself had been transformed into a bloodless sort of a blond individual who looked entirely harmless.

Nevertheless, it was toward him that Nick Carter gazed now, as he said sternly:

"Gevrais, the moment has come when I have got to trust you."

"Yes, monsieur."

"If I find that you are worthy of that trust, I will do even better for you in the end than I have already promised."

"Yes, monsieur."

"And if I find that you are in the least degree unworthy of it—if you fail me on one single point, however small, I will kill you; or, if I cannot kill you, I will hunt you to the uttermost ends of the earth and take you back to the guillotine, in Paris. Now, listen to me."

"Yes, monsieur."

"When you first entered these grounds, you came this way, did you not?"

"I did."

"And it was Lafarge who brought you here?"

"Yes."

"You have said that you notice things; that you were not born yesterday. Look at these footprints here, and tell me if you think either of them were made by Lafarge."

"Yes, monsieur. That one. There is no doubt of it. I know the shape of his foot as well as I know his signature."

"Very good. Now do you also know where he probably went from here? He had a young lady with him. The one who lives in that house. She came out here at my suggestion to put your infernal string with the lead tied to it over the wall, and he captured her. Take me to the place where you think he might have taken her."

"I only know the small hut, a quarter of a mile away, where I have been staying."

"Then take us there. Chick, you must keep in the background. You must not forget that you are now playing the part of Gevrais."

"For that very reason, Nick, I thought it best that I should keep in the foreground."

"No, no, lad, you are mistaken. Lafarge believes now that Gevrais has betrayed him. Don't you understand that? If Gevrais had not betrayed him, how else would

Miriam have known the signal? He would shoot you on sight, believing you to be Gevrais."

The footprints they were following kept to the path all the way to the hut, which was a deserted squatter's cabin of long ago; but it was empty. There was no one there, and beyond the fact that the footprints took them past it, there was nothing to indicate that it had been visited at all for years.

Moreover, beyond this point there was no path. Only thick, dry sod, for the frost of autumn had taken all the green out of it.

The detective looked at Gevrais inquiringly.

"There is a high bluff yonder, monsieur," said the Frenchman. "I have been to the edge of it and looked over, thinking that sometime I would go that way. Down the side of it there is a precipitous path, and below that, monsieur, there is a—factory."

"Ah!" said the detective. "Come on."

"But, monsieur——" began Gevrais, and when Nick turned to him, angrily, he added:

"You would not think of making the attack alone, would you?"

"Yes, fool, if there were a thousand there. Do you think that I will leave that girl for another hour in the power of those demons? *Come!*"

They hurried across the stretch of land that lay between them and the top of the bluff, which, after all, was not so very high, for it came only a trifle above the roof of the factory that nestled beneath it, close to the edge of the river; and here they paused.

The path, which led down the side of the bluff, passed through bushes so that a person in descending was effectually concealed from view.

"Come," said Nick. "We must attack the factory at once. Gevrais, can you fight?"

"If I had something to fight with I could do so, monsieur."

"And are you game?"

"As game as the best of them, monsieur. I am your slave for the present. I will fight for you if you will but give me the chance."

The detective took a big "forty-four" from one of his pockets, and gave it to the Frenchman.

"Then take this," he said. "I trust you."

"Monsieur, I thank you. I will not fail you. Not if it costs me my life."

"I believe you, Gevrais. There is good in every man, and I suspect there is a lot of it in you if it only had a chance to come out. See that you bring it out this morning."

After that they went on in silence, and in silence they arrived almost at the doors of the little factory which was hidden away there in a bend of the river, out of view from all places, and which had been erected years before for a boat-house, and abandoned.

They stopped for a moment only at the edge of the bushes, to look about them.

There seemed to be nobody in sight at all. The place appeared to be utterly deserted.

But it was only for a moment that the detective hesitated. He knew well that there was no time to spare. He knew that Miriam was in imminent danger each moment that she remained a captive in the hands of the fiends who had made her a prisoner, and he was determined that she should be rescued at all hazards, and that without the least delay.

That she was there in that factory, or in some adjunct to it, he did not for a moment doubt. In fact, he felt that it was so with that intuitive inspiration of knowing that you are right which comes to a man very rarely, but which can never be mistaken when it does come.

"She is there," he said to his companion. "She is there in that building somewhere. I am sure of it."

And then, without more words, he strode out into the open and straight across the short space which separated them from the building; and he was followed by the others, Gevrais being next to him, and Chick bringing up the rear.

The front door of the factory was fastened, but Nick, after trying it, told Gevrais to hold up the latch. At the same time he stepped back, and then drove his right foot full against it.

Locks and bolts could not withstand that onslaught, and the door gave; a second kick sent it reeling into the space beyond it, and through the opening thus made Nick Carter sprang without an instant of hesitation.

The place was empty.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE RESCUE AND THE FIGHT.

All three stopped and listened, but it was at once evident that the noise made by their assault had alarmed nobody. Whoever the men were who peopled that factory, they were not in evidence now.

"They are sleeping," said Gevrais laconically, who seemed a different man now that he had a weapon in his hand and that he had heard another man say that he trusted him.

But Nick was moving onward rapidly. He saw that the large room of the factory was divided by a partition which shut off about one-quarter of it at the opposite end, and toward that partition he now hurried.

He noticed, as he passed along, a large dynamo, and also a smaller one, and it was at once plain to him from whence he had received the shock he had experienced the preceding night.

"But all that is now over," he thought grimly, as he reached the door through the partition, and threw it open, for, unlike the outside door, it was not locked.

It was a strange sight which met his gaze as he opened that door.

The room beyond it had been arranged as a sort of dormitory, and along either side of it there were arranged six cots—twelve in all, and on each of the twelve cots there was a man asleep.

It seemed almost incredible that none of these had been aroused by the noise of the entrance of Nick and his companions, but it was, nevertheless, true. Then all remained sleeping soundly.

But the reason for this was apparent.

In the middle of the room was a long table with six chairs on either side of it. On the table were the remains of a hearty meal as well as unnumbered empty bottles which had once contained red wine—the natural drink of the working Frenchman.

"Did you bring chloroform with you, Chick?" asked the detective.

"Certainly."

"So did I. We will dose the whole lot of them. It is the only way, and after all, it is the best way, too. There is still another door at the far end of this room, and beyond that I am convinced that we will find what we seek."

It was a strange sight to see Nick on the one side and Chick—in his disguise—on the other side of that room, going from cot to cot, and holding at the nostrils and lips of each sleeping man a handkerchief saturated with the subtle drug; and each held it in place until assurance was made doubly sure that they would not rouse too quickly from their slumbers.

And at last it was all done.

At last Nick flung the now empty phial of chloroform from him, and Chick did the same. It had required all they had to do their work, and all the while Gevrais looked on wonderingly, but with the air of a pleased child.

"Come," said Nick, at last. "Now for the other door, and whatever is beyond it."

He approached it quickly and opened it, for it was not fastened.

It admitted him to a sort of entry, or, rather, a passageway at the opposite end of which there was still another door, and it seemed to Nick then that this last must lead into a room that would be beneath the earth itself, in the side of the bluff. In this he was not mistaken as he soon discovered.

He approached the door silently, followed by the others.

Listening, he could hear voices beyond it; and Gevrais reached up and whispered in his ear:

"Lafarge. I know the voice. The other man must be Gerome, and——"

What he might have said after that was drowned in a scream that came from the interior of the room. A loud, shrill cry for help, and it was in the voice of Miriam.

Powder, to which a lighted match is applied, could not explode more quickly than Nick Carter moved when he heard that scream.

With one kick of his foot the door was sent whirling into the room, broken into slivers, and over the fallen mass he bounded like a fury suddenly released.

He scarcely knew what he saw, or what he did.

He was vaguely conscious of the fact that there were four men in the room, and that in the midst of the assemblage Miriam Lee was seated in a chair, bound tightly to it, and that one of the four men was approaching her with something in his hand that looked like an electrode—that inexplicable something that is used at Sing Sing Prison for the execution of criminals.

There was a red belt across Miriam's forehead, too, showing that the cruel instrument of torture had already been once applied, and that the demons who had her in their power were about to continue the torture.

The crashing in of the door changed all this on the instant.

The man with the electrode in his hand started backward with a cry of amazement, and the others, who were seated, bounded to their feet in terror.

But they had no time to wonder what had happened, before Nick Carter and Chick—yes, and Gevrais, also—were upon them.

Nick struck a terrific blow at the man with the electrode, who dodged it beautifully, and in turn aimed a blow at Nick; but this time the detective darted under his guard and seized him around the waist. Then he lifted him in the air and threw him from him just as one of the other men seized him from behind.

This man Nick could not throw off for a second or two, and then somebody fired a pistol, which sounded almost in the detective's ear.

Somehow then he threw the man from his back, and, as he staggered to his feet again, he saw Gevrais reel and fall almost in front of him with his arms locked tightly around one of the men who had been witnessing the torture of Miriam.

And then he saw the man of the electrode slowly recovering from his fall in the corner, and he made for him a second time, for he had no doubt that this man was Baptiste Lafarge.

There was a devilish smile on the Frenchman's face, and Nick noticed that he still held the electrode in his hand, and that he was about to use it as a weapon.

The detective could have shot him where he stood, easily, but he realized that the man was unarmed, save for that hellish thing in his hand, and he held his fire.

One hasty glance around him assured him that the other fighting was about over.

It was true that Chick was still busy in one corner of the room with his man, and that Gevrais and another were still locked together on the floor where the fourth of the conspirators was lying, stark and still.

And then the detective realized that Lafarge had started toward him, and he turned to meet the man—whom Gevrais had described as being as strong as Goliath.

He was a big man—a very big man—and, as he rushed forward, Nick Carter ducked under his guard, and seized him around the legs. Then, exerting all his strength, he lifted the man high in the air, got one hand under his feet, and then actually tossed him from him as he might have done the act with a stick.

Lafarge fell backward; and as he fell he put up his hands, one of which still held the electrode. He put the hand up to save himself, but it killed him, and in a most unusual way.

He managed somehow to get his hand in just the right place so that, when he fell, his head came down squarely into the electrode.

It had been made to fit around the head, and it had just been small enough to fit around the head of Miriam Lee; and now, when this giant fell upon it, the weight of his body forced his own head through an opening that was too small for it.

The electrode would stretch and give, but it would not break. The electric power was turned on, and the consequence was immediate.

Mortal man never uttered a more terrible scream than that which came from the mouth of Baptiste Lafarge then—but it was his last. Then his body twisted and writhed. His hands clenched themselves until the fingernails dug deeply into the flesh. His limbs contorted themselves into knots, and then the odor of burning flesh filled the room, but instantly the detective saw the switch against the wall, and he leaped forward and turned it off.

But Lafarge was already quite dead—killed by the very instrument with which he would have tortured Miriam Lee.

Chick had now recovered from the battle he had waged in the corner. He had ironed his man and was already engaged in liberating Miriam. Gevrais and his fellow combatant were still locked together on the floor.

When Nick went over to them, he found that the man with whom Gevrais had been fighting was already dead, and that Gevrais was done for; however, the poor fellow looked up and smiled into the detective's eyes.

"At least," he said, "I die in a good cause, and really, monsieur, I would rather it would be this way than that I had taken the hundred thousand francs and escaped. I die with honor, even if I have lived dishonored. It was Lafarge who did it. My wig became displaced. He knew me, then, and he shot me; and the same bullet passed through the heart of the other man, I think. Anyhow, it killed him. There is an old mother of mine in the Rue Lili, near Abatoirs, in Paris, to whom you might send some of the money if you wish. Thank you. That is all. Tell the young lady that I——"

Jules Gevrais' breath stopped as one might snuff a candle. He never spoke again.

And so, after all, there were but two prisoners, not counting the twelve outside in the other room, who were mere workmen and puppets. But one of these two was Edouard Gerome, and he was returned to Paris to finish his sentence at the guillotine.

"Why were they torturing you, Miriam?" the detective asked of her, a little later, after the police had been called in, and he, with Miriam and Chick, were making ready to return to the mansion.

"Because their plans had all failed at the last moment. They were trying to make me tell them the secrets of the time-lock on the office door, and to force me to take them to the vaults. Their plans had failed. The rotting process, invented by Gerome, had utterly failed. It would not touch the steel. More than that, they had arrived within a hundred feet of the house with their tunnels, only to find that they were absolutely stopped by a wall of hard rock which they could not hope to pierce."

"But how were you captured?"

"That big man—Lafarge—was inside the grounds, waiting, when I went to the walls to do your bidding. He was waiting there for the man, Gevrais. He seized me. They handed me over the wall as if I were a bag of meal. It was a terrible experience, but it has not lasted long."

"Quite long enough, I'll be bound," said the detective.

Later, Nick persuaded Miriam to purchase all the land between her home and the river, and the props were taken from the tunnels so that a blast or two sent off inside them made them cave in and fill.

THE END.

The next issue of the NICK CARTER WEEKLY, No. 495, will contain "The Klondike Bank Puzzle; or, Nick Carter's Narrow Escape."


## ABOUT THE EARLY NUMBERS OF THE TIP TOP WEEKLY

WE receive hundreds of letters every week from readers asking if we can supply the early numbers of Tip Top containing Frank's adventures. In every case we are obliged to reply that numbers 1 to 300 are entirely out of print. We would like to call the attention of our readers to the fact that the Frank Merriwell Stories now being published in book form in the Medal Library are inclusive of these early numbers. The first book to appear was No. 150 entitled "Frank Merriwell's Schooldays." We give herewith a complete list of all stories that have been published in book form up to the time of writing. We will be glad to send a fine colored catalogue of the Medal Library which is just filled with good things for boys, upon receipt of a one-cent stamp to cover postage.

**MEDAL LIBRARY**

No.
150—Frank Merriwell's Schooldays.
167—Frank Merriwell's Chums.
178—Frank Merriwell's Foes.
184—Frank Merriwell's Trip West.
189—Frank Merriwell Down South.
193—Frank Merriwell's Bravery.
197—Frank Merriwell's Hunting Tour.
201—Frank Merriwell in Europe.
205—Frank Merriwell at Yale.
209—Frank Merriwell's Sports Afield.
213—Frank Merriwell's Races.
217—Frank Merriwell's Bicycle Tour.
225—Frank Merriwell's Courage.
229—Frank Merriwell's Daring.
233—Frank Merriwell's Athletes.
237—Frank Merriwell's Skill.
240—Frank Merriwell's Champions.
244—Frank Merriwell's Return to Yale.
247—Frank Merriwell's Secret.
251—Frank Merriwell's Danger.
254—Frank Merriwell's Loyalty.
258—Frank Merriwell in Camp.
262—Frank Merriwell's Vacation.
267—Frank Merriwell's Cruise.

**MEDAL LIBRARY**

No.
271—Frank Merriwell's Chase.
276—Frank Merriwell in Maine.
280—Frank Merriwell's Struggle.
284—Frank Merriwell's First Job.
288—Frank Merriwell's Opportunity.
292—Frank Merriwell's Hard Luck.
296—Frank Merriwell's Protégé.
300—Frank Merriwell on the Road.
304—Frank Merriwell's Own Company.
308—Frank Merriwell's Fame.
312—Frank Merriwell's College Chums.
316—Frank Merriwell's Problem.
320—Frank Merriwell's Fortune.
324—Frank Merriwell's New Comedian.
328—Frank Merriwell's Prosperity.
332—Frank Merriwell's Stage Hit.
336—Frank Merriwell's Great Scheme.
340—Frank Merriwell in England.
344—Frank Merriwell on the Boulevards.
348—Frank Merriwell's Duel.
352—Frank Merriwell's Double Shot.
356—Frank Merriwell's Baseball Victories.
359—Frank Merriwell's Confidence.
362—Frank Merriwell's Auto.
365—Frank Merriwell's Fun.

*The Price of the Merriwell Books is Ten Cents per Copy. At all Newsdealers*

# THE ROUGH RIDER WEEKLY

**ISSUED EVERY MONDAY.** **HANDSOME COLORED COVER**

Ted Strong wants to make your acquaintance, boys, and we are convinced that you will be proud to have him as a friend. The tales of his adventures among the cowboys are full of fascinating interest. He is known to every one as "King of the Wild West" and he upholds the title.

## PRICE FIVE CENTS PER COPY

**For sale by all newsdealers, or sent, by the publishers to any address upon receipt of price in money or postage stamps**

## HERE ARE THE LATEST TITLES:

94—King of the Wild West's Submarine; or, The Search for Sunken Treasure.
95—King of the Wild West's Finish; or, The Great Stone Door.
96—King of the Wild West's Peril; or, The Cannibals of Tiburon Island.
97—King of the Wild West's Strange Quest; or, The White Princess of Sonora.
98—King of the Wild West's Horsethief; or, The Enigma of Lost Springs.
99—King of the Wild West's Chase; or, The Rescue of Yuen Ho.
100—King of the Wild West's Meteor; or, The Race for the Klondike Diamond.
101—King of the Wild West in Siberia; or, Castaway on the Arctic Ocean.
102—King of the Wild West's Haunt; or, Stella's Escape from Sacrifice.
103—King of the Wild West's Dive; or, The Finding of the "Golden Baby."
104—King of the Wild West's Guard; or, Stella's Long Shot.
105—King of the Wild West's Posse; or, Stella's Own Vigilance Committee.
106—King of the Wild West Underground; or, Stella to the Rescue.
107—King of the Wild West's Brand; or, How Stella Held the Fort.
108—King of the Wild West's Campaign; or, How Stella Won the Victory.
109—King of the Wild West's Booty; or, Stella Finds the Pirate Loot.
110—King of the Wild West's Success; or, Stella and the Marked Bill.
111—King of the Wild West's Daring; or, Stella's Great Lariat Throw.
112—King of the Wild West's Key; or, Stella in the Hidden Vault.
113—King of the Wild West's "Hassayamper"; or, Stella in the Death Cavern.
114—King of the Wild West's Strength; or, Stella on the Cattle Ranch.
115—King of the Wild West's Danger; or, Stella among the Hopis.

## IF YOU WANT ANY BACK NUMBERS

or our libraries and cannot procure them from newsdealers, they can be obtained from this office direct. Cut out and fill in the following order blank and send it to us with the price of the books you want and we will send them to you by return mail. **POSTAGE STAMPS TAKEN THE SAME AS MONEY.**

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. .....190

Gentlemen:—Enclosed find.....cents for which please send me:

.....copies of **Tip Top** Nos.....
..... " " **Nick Carter** Nos.....
..... " " **Diamond Dick** Nos.....
..... " " **Buffalo Bill** Nos.....
..... " " **Brave and Bold** Nos.....
..... " " **Rough Rider** Nos.....

Name.....Street and No.....Town.....State.....

# A GRAND IDEA

THE old popular favorite, Frank Merriwell, has signalized his triumphant return to the pages of TIP TOP, beginning with No. 512, by opening a novel

# SCHOOL OF ATHLETIC DEVELOPMENT

where he has put into practice some clever schemes long entertained, with the idea of building up the constitutions of backward lads. Here, there has naturally opened up a glorious opportunity for meeting new characters; while the strange adventures and thrilling situations connected with up-to-date American sports are handled as only Frank Merriwell knows how.

The famous TIP TOP promises great things from this time on to its world-wide circle of admirers, and with this novel field open to such a talented pen, you may rest assured, boys, Burt L. Standish will spread such a feast before you as has never before been dreamed of.

Tell all your young friends that Frank has come back to his own, better equipped than ever to arouse the interest and enthusiam of his vast army of boy admirers. Consult the catalogue below for titles.

512—Frank Merriwell's New Idea; or, The American School of Athletic Development.
513—Frank Merriwell's Trouble; or, Enemies of the School.
514—Frank Merriwell's Pupils; or, The Wizards of Water Polo.
515—Dick Merriwell's Satisfaction: or, Hot Work at Indoor Baseball.
516—Dick Merriwell's Discernment; or, The Heroism of a Coward.
517—Dick Merriwell's Friendly Hand; or, The Boy Who Was Saved.
518—Frank Merriwell's New Boy; or, The Folly of Dale Sparkfair.
519—Frank Merriwell's Mode; or, Winning the Confidence of a Wild Lad.
520—Frank Merriwell's Aids; or, "The Secret Order of Scalp Lifters."
521—Dick Merriwell's Visit; or, Hot Times at Farnham Hall.
522—Dick Merriwell's Retaliation; or, Fardale Against Farnham Hall.
523—Dick Merriwell's Rival; or, Dale Sparkfair at Fardale.
524—Frank Merriwell's Young Crew; or, The Mystery of the Boat House.
525—Frank Merriwell's Fast Nine; or, Champions of the County.
526—Frank Merriwell's Athletic Field; or, The Great Meet at Bloomfield.
527—Dick Merriwell's Reprisal; or, The Clash of the Champions.
528—Dick Merriwell Dared; or, The Grapple at Wellsburg.

## Price, Five Cents.

**For sale by all newsdealers, or sent postpaid by the publishers upon receipt of price.**

**STREET & SMITH,** *Publishers,* **NEW YORK**

# The Nick Carter Weekly

**ISSUED EVERY SATURDAY.** **HANDSOMEST COLORED COVERS**

No other detective library contains stories that are half so interesting. Nick Carter has been all over the world and has had experience with all kinds of criminals.

That's why, boys, his adventures holds one's interest from cover to cover. There is no brutality in Nick's make-up—he does not need it—he uses his wits. Do not fail to get the latest number from your newsdealer.

## PRICE FIVE CENTS PER COPY

**For sale by all newsdealers, or sent, by the publishers to any address upon receipt of price in money or postage stamps**

## HERE ARE THE LATEST TITLES:

477—Captain Satan, the Unknown; or, Nick Carter's Great Mistake.
478—A Wizard of the Highway; or, Nick Carter's Test of Faith.
479—Abducted in Broad Day; or, Nick Carter's Duplicate Prisoner.
480—The Tong of the Tailless Dragon; or, Nick Carter's Close Shave.
481—The Padlocked Mystery; or, Nick Carter and the Death Plot Trap.
482—Dema, the Dangerous; or, Nick Carter's Chase to Paris.
483—Nick Carter's Murder Problem; or, A Hide-and-Seek Game with the Dead.
484—A Battle Among the Clouds; or, Nick Carter's Criminal Client.
485—The Veiled Princess; or, Nick Carter's Secret Accomplishment.
486—The Conquest of a Kingdom; or, Nick Carter's Fight for a Throne.
487—The House of Skeletons; or, Nick Carter's Greatest Find.
488—A Queen of Inferno; or, Nick Carter's Giant Foes.
489—Nick Carter's Foxy Adversary; or, The Lures of the Bird of Paradise.
490—Three Times In Peril; or, Nick Carter's Busiest Night.
491—The Gold Lettered Dagger; or, Nick Carter's Most Tragic Case.
492—That Mysterious Affair; or, Chick's Wonderful Twelve Hours Work.
493—A Dead Guardian of Millions; or, Nick Carter Uncovers a Mystery.
494—The Mysterious Treasure Hunters; or, Nick Carter's Bargain With a Crook.
495—The Klondike Bank Puzzle; or, Nick Carter's Narrow Escape.
496—The "Bad Man" of Nome; or, Nick Carter's Hunt in Alaska.

## IF YOU WANT ANY BACK NUMBERS

of our libraries and cannot procure them from newsdealers, they can be obtained from this office direct. Cut out and fill in the following order blank and send it to us with the price of the books you want and we will send them to you by return mail. **POSTAGE STAMPS TAKEN THE SAME AS MONEY.**

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. .....190

Gentlemen:—Enclosed find.....cents for which please send me:

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| .....copies of | **Tip Top** | Nos..... | ..... | ..... |
| ..... " | **Nick Carter** | Nos..... | ..... | ..... |
| ..... " | **Diamond Dick** | Nos..... | ..... | ..... |
| ..... " | **Buffalo Bill** | Nos..... | ..... | ..... |
| ..... " | **Brave and Bold** | Nos..... | ..... | ..... |
| ..... " | **Rough Rider** | Nos..... | ..... | ..... |

Name.....Street and No.....Town.....State.....

# The Greatest Baseball Story

ever written, by the most popular writer of stories of athletics in the world, ***Burt L. Standish,*** will appear as a serial, commencing in the July number of

# *The Popular Magazine*

for sale at all news stands for ten cents per copy on June 10. The announcement of a new, long story by Mr. Standish will interest practically every young man in the United States. Every one who has ever read the Frank Merriwell stories, every one who is interested in the least in the great national game of baseball, every one who likes a story of action and incident in which every character is real and true to life, is sure to read this story, which is entitled

## "THE ROCKSPUR NINE."

It is the story of a baseball nine, but above all, it is the story of a real, human character—a young man with plenty of good points but with plenty of failings also. In reading the history of his temptations, of his struggles and final victory, you feel toward him as toward a comrade and friend. You know, without being told, that Burt L. Standish can describe a game of baseball as can no other author. You know that he is absolutely unequaled in his ability to interest and hold his readers. This announcement will serve as a friendly hint to you to secure the copy of *The Popular* containing the first instalment in advance. Tens of thousands are awaiting another long story by Mr. Standish, and the edition is sure to be sold out within a short time after its appearance on the news stands.

**THE POPULAR MAGAZINE is the only magazine for young men. It is the only magazine which contains NOTHING but STORIES OF ADVENTURE. It is the largest fiction magazine issued. There are no "articles" in it, no poems, no love stories, nothing but stories of incident and dashing adventure. It costs 10c. at any news stand.**

**STREET & SMITH, PUBLISHERS, NEW YORK**

# THE FAVORITE LIST
## OF FIVE-CENT LIBRARIES

### NICK CARTER WEEKLY

We know, boys, that there is no need of introducing to you Nicholas Carter, the greatest sleuth that ever lived. Every number containing the adventures of Nick Carter has a peculiar, but delightful, power of fascination.

### MIGHT AND MAIN

These are stories of the adventures of boys who succeeded in climbing the ladder of fame by honest effort. No more interesting tales can be imagined. Each number is at least one-third longer than the ordinary five-cent library.

### DIAMOND DICK WEEKLY

The demand for stirring stories of Western adventure is admirably filled by this library. Every up-to-date boy ought to read just how law and order are established and maintained on our Western plains by Diamond Dick, Bertie, and Handsome Harry.

### BUFFALO BILL STORIES

Buffalo Bill is the hero of a thousand exciting adventures among the Redskins. These are given to our boys only in the Buffalo Bill Stories. They are bound to interest and please you.

### ROUGH RIDER WEEKLY

Ted Strong was appointed deputy marshal by accident, but he resolves to use his authority and rid his ranch of some very tough bullies. He does it in such a slick way that everyone calls him "King of the Wild West" and he certainly deserves his title.

### BRAVE AND BOLD

Every boy who prefers variety in his reading matter, ought to be a reader of Brave and Bold. All these were written by authors who are past masters in the art of telling boys' stories. Every tale is complete in itself.

### BOWERY BOY LIBRARY

The adventures of a poor waif whose only name is "Bowery Billy." Billy is the true product of the streets of New York. No boy can read the tales of his trials without imbibing some of that resource and courage that makes the character of this homeless boy stand out so prominently.

### THE TIP TOP WEEKLY

Boys, Frank Merriwell has opened a school of physical development. He has gathered all of his old-time comrades about him and their adventures are wonderfully interesting. These are certainly the best tales of athletic adventure.